THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

JANUARY 1958

# Marxism Today


THE GREAT REVOLUTIONARY DECLARATIONS

IDRIS COX — NEW FACTORS IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM

BRIAN SIMON — SECONDARY SCHOOL SELECTION

TOM VAUGHAN — THE THEATRE IN BRITAIN TODAY

IVOR MONTAGU — ATLANTIC BROADSIDE

DISCUSSION:

REG BEECH — MORE ON ECONOMIC CRISIS

SOVIET ECONOMISTS — THE LAW OF VALUE AND PRICE POLICY UNDER SOCIALISM


Monthly 1/6

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Marxism Today

**Vol. 2** **No. 1**

CONTENTS


| | | page |
|---|---|---|
| | **The Great Revolutionary Declarations** ... ... ... Editorial from the *People's Daily*, Peking, on the declarations of the Moscow meetings of the world's Communist Parties | 1 |
| Idris Cox | **New Factors in the Struggle against Imperialism** ... ... Discusses the new advances of the anti-imperialist struggle, the role of the national bourgeoisie, economic liberation and socialist aid, imperialism and its effect on the British working class | 5 |
| Brian Simon | **Secondary School Selection: a Reply to Intelligence-Testers** Discusses the questions of "streaming" and intelligence tests, analysing some recent works of those who seek to justify such tests | 13 |
| Tom Vaughan | **The Theatre in Britain Today** ... Discusses the decline of the theatre in Britain, its causes, and what needs to be done about it | 20 |
| Ivor Montagu | **Atlantic Broadside** ... ... Reviews and exposes "The New Class" of Milovan Djilas | 25 |
| Discussion<br>Reg Beech | **More on Economic Crisis** ... Further contribution to discussion on the Marxist theory of crisis | 30 |
| Soviet Economists | **The Law of Value and Price Policy under Socialism** ... Summary of some recent discussions of Soviet economists | 31 |


FEBRUARY AND COMING ISSUES

| | |
|---|---|
| John Lewis | **Marxism and Ethics** |
| Colin Sweet | **Parliament and the State** |
| R. Page Arnot | **Foundation of the British Communist Party** |
| J. R. Campbell | **Three Wise Men—A Study of Wage Policy** |
| Jack Lindsay | **Wordsworth—the Poet and his Politics** |
| Tony Goss | **The British Middle Classes** |
| Discussion | **More on Theory of Crisis; Marxism and the British Labour Movement etc.** |


**Editor** John Gollan

**Assistant Editor**
James Klugmann

**Editorial Board**
Professor J. D. Bernal
Emile Burns
Les Burt
Maurice Cornforth
Maurice Dobb
Arnold Kettle
John Lewis
John Mahon
Frank Stanley
Professor George Thomson
John Wood



**Editorial correspondence**
James Klugmann,
16 King Street, W.C.2.

**Advertisements**
Margaret Williamson,
above address.

**Orders and Subscriptions**
usual agents or
Central Books Ltd.,
37 Grays Inn Road,
London, W.C.1.

**Subscription rates**
Six issues 10s. 6d.
Twelve issues 21s.


PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# The Great Revolutionary Declarations

(The following is an article from the *People's Daily*, Peking, of November 25th, 1957.)

THE representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties of twelve socialist countries held a meeting in Moscow from November 14th to 16th. Later, from November 16th to 19th the representatives of the sixty-four Communist and Workers' Parties that participated in the celebrations of the fortieth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Moscow held another meeting. At both meetings views were exchanged on questions concerning the current world situation and the strengthening of solidarity between the Parties of all countries. One meeting unanimously adopted a declaration and the other unanimously adopted a manifesto. This event is of immense importance in international politics; it is an event of immense importance, too, in the history of the international Communist movement.

The working masses who are struggling for liberation and the peace-loving people in all countries of the world will draw boundless confidence and courage from both meetings and the declarations adopted at them.

The twelve Parties which participated in the meeting of the Communist and Workers' Parties of the socialist countries represent people totalling more than one-third of all mankind, who have become masters of their own nations and are building socialism. Together with these twelve Parties were eighteen Parties from Europe, eleven from Asia, eighteen from the Americas, three from Africa and two from Australia which adopted the Peace Manifesto.

The new international solidarity of the Communist movement has emerged in the following circumstances—the socialist countries already have a population of nearly 1,000 million; not counting the Chinese People's Republic, the Korean Democratic People's Republic and the Viet Nam Democratic Republic, the countries which have been newly liberated from colonial oppression and obtained their national independence have a population of over 700 million; and apart from these two types of countries and the imperialist countries, another 600 million people belong to countries and nations which are now seeking independence from imperialism, or to capitalist countries with neutralist tendencies. The population of the imperialist countries numbers only something over 400 million, and the imperialist countries are seething with contradictions. The contradictions between the various imperialist countries are becoming sharper day by day. Within each imperialist country, the broad masses of the exploited classes and the peace-loving people are waging more and more extensive struggles against exploitation and against policies of aggression.

The new international solidarity of the Communist movement has emerged in the following circumstances—not only has the speed of economic development of the socialist camp far outstripped that of the imperialist camp, but the first and most powerful socialist country, the Soviet Union, has already surpassed the most developed country, the United States, in certain important fields of science and technology. The great success of the Soviet Union in launching two artificial satellites has evoked cheers of applause from the people of the whole world, and consternation and confusion among the aggressive imperialist cliques. The superiority of the socialist system has manifested itself so strikingly that the Americans are now forced for the first time to raise the slogan of catching up with the Soviet Union.

The declarations of the two meetings analyse the current international situation and point to the change in the balance of forces in world politics. The declaration of the Communist and Workers' Parties of the socialist countries makes a detailed analysis of the circumstances in which "the balance of forces in the international arena is favourable to a profound, historic change and a tremendous spurt forward for socialism".

From various angles it shows that socialism is on the upgrade and imperialism is heading for decline. It points out that the aggressive forces of United States imperialism are "the centre of world reaction" which by their policy are "courting their own ruin, creating their own grave-diggers". The declaration states: "The cause of peace is upheld by the powerful forces of our era: the invincible camp of socialist countries

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

headed by the Soviet Union; the peace-loving countries of Asia and Africa taking an anti-imperialist stand and forming, together with the socialist countries, a broad peace zone; the international working class and above all its vanguard —the Communist Parties; the liberation movement of the people of the colonies and semi-colonies; the mass peace movement of the peoples; the peoples of the European countries who have proclaimed neutrality; the peoples of Latin America and the masses in the imperialist countries who are putting up increasing resistance to the plans for a new war. An alliance of these mighty forces could prevent war, but should the bellicose imperialist maniacs venture, regardless of anything, to unleash a war, imperialism will doom itself to destruction, for the peoples will not tolerate a system that brings them so much suffering and exacts so many sacrifices." The Peace Manifesto also declares: "We Communists say that now it is possible to prevent war, possible to safeguard peace. We say this with full confidence because the world situation today is different, and the balance of forces has changed."

The October Revolution was a fundamental turning point in world history which shook the world domination of capitalism to its foundations and opened up the new era of proletarian revolution. Thereafter, the victory in the world war against fascism and the victory of the Chinese Revolution which followed was another important turning point which greatly expanded the forces of socialism and weakened the forces of imperialism. Now the world situation is moving into a new turning point; the forces of the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union have definitely surpassed those of the imperialist camp headed by the United States both in popular support, in population and in a number of most important scientific and technological fields. As Comrade Mao Tse-tung has put it colloquially, it is now the East wind that prevails over the West wind, not the West wind over the East wind.

The superiority in strength of socialism over imperialism has been demonstrated before now in a series of facts. These are: in the Second World War the main power which destroyed Hitler and triumphed over the Japanese aggressors was the Soviet Union and not the combined forces of the United States and Britain; in the Chinese people's war of liberation the victor was not Chiang Kai-shek who had the strong support of the United States, but the revolutionary people of China; in the Korean war, the Chinese People's Volunteers and the Korean People's Army threw the so-called United Nations forces, with the United States armed forces as their main strength, back from the Yalu River to south of the 38th parallel; in Viet Nam, the Viet Nam Democratic Republic thoroughly defeated the armed forces of the United States-supported French colonialists; in Egypt's struggle to defend its sovereignty over the Suez Canal, the Soviet Union's warning to Britain, France and Israel, coupled with the opposition of world public opinion, played a decisive role in halting aggression; in Syria's recent struggle to safeguard its national independence, the Soviet Union's warning to the United States and Turkey also blocked the carrying out of their original plans of aggression. In addition, the decline of imperialist forces has also been strikingly manifested in the withdrawal of Britain from India, Burma, Egypt and other colonies, the withdrawal of the Netherlands from Indonesia, the withdrawal of France from a whole series of colonies in Western Asia and North Africa. It goes without saying that these withdrawals resulted from the double blows to imperialism by the socialist forces and the nationalist forces which oppose colonialism.

The superiority of the anti-imperialist forces over the imperialist forces demonstrated by these events has expressed itself in even more concentrated form and reached unprecedented heights with the Soviet Union's launching of the artificial satellites and the solidarity and unanimity achieved at the two Moscow meetings of the Communist and Workers' Parties of various countries. That is why we say that this is a new turning point in the international situation.

Some people who observe things superficially, and do not see the essence of a question, do not believe that socialism is really superior in strength to imperialism. They say the output of iron and steel and the total quantity of many other products in the United States are still much higher than in the Soviet Union, and it will not be long before the United States can also produce its own artificial satellite and inter-continental ballistic missile and so on and so forth. They do not understand that the balance of forces cannot be decided simply by the quantity of iron and steel or other products. The basic question is—on which side is justice, to which side do the people give their support; what is the nature of the political strength; what is the nature of the system? History frequently shows that the weak defeats the strong and the unarmed defeats the fully armed. The reason is that these weak unarmed people stand on the side of justice and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

represent the direction of advance in history, represent the demands of the growth of productive forces, they are united and therefore they can defeat the superficially strong, fully armed, reactionary groups. Those who stand by what is right will be helped by many and those who abandon it will find little support. In our age, Socialism is right, it is justice, it represents the general trend and the people's aspirations. Though, for the time being, the output of some products is smaller on our side than in the imperialist countries, yet because ours is the side of Socialism, the socialist system plus a certain level of material strength gives us superiority in the entire balance of forces. When the Second World War and the later events which we enumerated above occurred, did not the United States turn out much more iron and steel and other products than the Soviet Union? But did this fact change the outcome of these events? No doubt the United States will have its own artificial satellite and intercontinental ballistic missile. But what is important here is the speed and growth of social productive forces.

The rate of progress in the socialist countries has in the past been higher than that of the capitalist countries and it will certainly continue to be so in the future. If the Soviet Union has already surpassed the United States in major fields of science and technology at a time when its per capita production has still not reached that of the United States, the general trend from now on must be to increase the Soviet Union's lead more and more. The United States will try to catch up, but the Soviet Union will be still farther ahead. Besides the Soviet Union, too, there are the other socialist countries with a total population of nearly 800 million that are also progressing rapidly; this too must be taken into account. In his speech in celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution, Comrade Khrushchev said that in fifteen years the Soviet Union will surpass the United States in per capita production. It can be expected that, in the same period or a little longer, China will catch up or surpass Britain in the production of iron and steel and other major industrial products. By that time, the socialist camp will leave the imperialist camp still farther behind in peaceful competition.

Some say, since the meetings of the Communist and Workers' Parties call for peace and peaceful co-existence in their declarations, why should they indulge in discussing the balance of forces? We Communists have always stood for peace, but peace can only be won, not begged for. The imperialists show no compassion for the people; they recognise only strength.

History has seen numerous aggressive wars which have never been caused by too great a strength on the side of the people opposing war or the victims of aggression. On the contrary, the aggressors have invariably unleashed wars when they have been able to do as they wished with impunity, or at least when they thought they could. The Communists are completely against war and the passionate declaration of peace endorsed by the sixty-four Parties gives concentrated expression to this standpoint. While the Communists demand "peace to the world", peaceful competition between socialism and capitalism and top-level talks between East and West to relax international tension, the United States imperialists are blatantly proclaiming the Hitlerite slogan of "more guns and less butter", stepping up war preparations and, in the name of all this, trying to tighten their control over all the countries of the Western military blocs. In this situation, is it not very clear who is for and who is against peace? Is it not very clear that peace cannot be begged for from the aggressors? The declarations of both the Moscow meetings point to the characteristic feature of the present situation—that the people already have sufficient strength to prevent war and safeguard peace provided they unite in this struggle and constantly maintain their vigilance. The declarations explain the changes in the balance of forces precisely in order to give the people full confidence in the cause of peace and convincingly mobilise the broad masses to force the imperialist aggressive blocs to abandon their diabolical plans of war.

Both the declaration and the manifesto call upon the people all over the world to achieve the broadest unity for peace. The declaration points out that unity among the Communist and Workers' Parties of all countries and among the socialist countries is the core of every kind of broader unity. Undoubtedly, the two Moscow meetings have ushered in a new stage of international unity in the Communist movement.

The swiftness of history's advance always outstrips people's estimates. When the First International held its first Congress in Geneva in 1866, the sixty delegates who attended represented only twenty-five branches in Britain, France, Switzerland and Germany. Before it abandoned the revolutionary proletarian standpoint, the Second International had extended the ranks of the international labour movement. But it was still limited

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to Europe and the United States. The Third International extended the ranks of the Communist movement on a wide scale. However, before the Second World War, there were only forty-three Communist Parties in all in the world with an aggregate membership of over 3,100,000. Now, representatives of sixty-four Parties attended the Moscow meeting and, moreover, a number of Parties were not represented due to reactionary obstruction. The aggregate membership of the Communist Parties of the world has risen to over 33 million.

The two Moscow meetings not only surpassed any previous period in the international Communist movement for breadth of solidarity, but also made great contributions to the strengthening of this solidarity by summing up the experience of the international Communist movement in the past hundred years, and especially in the past forty years. The declaration of the Communist and Workers' Parties of the socialist countries gives special attention to the ideological-political basis of this solidarity. It expounds the principle of internationalism in the relations between the socialist countries and their standpoint of solidarity and mutual assistance.

It devotes considerable space to explaining the inter-relations between the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism and the national peculiarities of various countries, the necessity of publicising and applying dialectical materialism in practical work and not only in textbooks of philosophy, the class character and historical roots of revisionism and the fact that it is the main danger under present conditions, the long-term existence of a struggle between two roads in the socialist countries, the two possible forms of transition from capitalism to socialism in various countries, the importance of establishing united fronts in the struggle for peace, national independence and socialism and in the building of socialism, and to explaining other questions.

The meeting of the Communist and Workers' Parties did not consider the establishment of an international organisation like the three Internationals of the past or the Information Bureau which was set up later, because there is no need for it in present conditions. But the meeting declared: "In present conditions it is expedient, besides bilateral meetings of leading personnel and exchange of information, to hold as the need arises, more representative conferences of Communist and Workers' Parties to discuss current problems, share experience, study each other's views and attitudes and concert action in the joint struggle for the common goals—peace, democracy and socialism." At the meetings, the method of consultation enabled unanimity of views to be reached on many questions among the parties of various countries. This, too, will have a far-reaching positive effect on the future strengthening of the international unity of the Communist movement.

It is of great significance that the Moscow meeting pointed out the central role of the Soviet Union in the solidarity of the socialist countries. Solidarity must have a centre, a leader. At a time when the imperialist camp refuses peaceful co-existence, spares no effort to undermine the socialist countries and the international Communist movement and menaces all humanity with plans for new war, recognition of this truth is especially necessary for the socialist camp, the bulwark of world peace, and for the Communist ranks in all countries, the backbone of the international workers' movement. This position of the Soviet Union as the centre of solidarity is an objective reality brought about historically, and not something that somebody has created artificially. The Soviet Union is the first and the most powerful socialist country and the experience of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is, comparatively, the most complete, the richest and that which has weathered the severest tests. Strengthening the solidarity of the socialist camp, headed by the Soviet Union, and the solidarity of the international Communist movement with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as its centre, conforms not only with the interests of the people of the socialist countries and the international proletariat but also with the interests of the cause of world peace and progress and the interests of all mankind.

The two meetings which demonstrated the great international solidarity of the Communist and Workers' Parties were held at the time of a great turn in world politics in favour of socialism and all the anti-imperialist forces, and the calling of these meetings will in turn greatly strengthen the socialist countries and the international Communist movement, and greatly strengthen the broad masses struggling for peace, democracy and national liberation. The historically significant success of the two meetings is in sharp contrast to the broadening contradictions in the imperialist camp. The future of the world belongs to the people, to socialism. No matter how the imperialists and reactionaries of various countries hamper the advance of history, history keeps on advancing, just as the earth keeps on turning.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# New Factors in the Struggle Against Imperialism

*Idris Cox*

WHAT will the New Year bring? This question is in the minds and on the tongues of countless millions throughout the world. Will it bring war or peace, more national oppression or victories for national independence, new hardships or greater prosperity, the peaceful exploration of new planets or the use of more devilish weapons for mass destruction?

Every year the bells are supposed to "ring out the old and ring in the new"; and every year they ring in both the old and the new—though part of the new is blended with the old, and part of the old with the new.

For many years peace has been the heart-felt wish of the ordinary man and woman in every country. With great contrasts in climate, living standards, colour of skin, religions and customs, and even sharper conflicts in political views—the desire for peace is common to them all. And they desire it not only in 1958 but for all time.

The prospect of a nuclear world war has aroused mankind, even more the women-folk all over the world. Not only the desire, but the movement for peace is growing. And as it grows more rapidly into action for peace, so will the threatening clouds of war roll away.

New factors have arisen which are making a powerful impact on world affairs. Former colonies are winning their independence. Newly independent nations are determined to cherish their hard-won freedom and to advance to the next stage of economic liberation from imperialism. Conscious of the growing economic strength and political influence of the socialist world, they gather new confidence in their resistance to new forms of imperialist domination.

In the imperialist countries the press and radio constantly present the issue of war or peace as one between the "Great Powers". Between the Governments of Britain, the United States, and France on the one hand, and the Soviet Union on the other, there are certainly conflicts of policy; but they arise from the contrast of two social systems.

The Soviet Union declares that these differences can be resolved without resort to war, that new "summit talks" could at least reach limited agreement on the issues of nuclear warfare, and that peaceful co-existence is possible between the two social systems.

Recent advances in Soviet economy and science have won world-wide admiration, and 1958 will prove even more the superiority of socialism over imperialism and the capitalist system as a whole. But it would be foolish to believe that this will soften the hearts of the imperialists. It is precisely their recognition of this socialist advance, and the contrast between the two social systems, which lies behind their efforts to step up the "cold war" campaign—and the language used, and threats made, are often akin to a state of actual war.

Of course, the aim of the "cold war" is to create the impression that it's the Soviet Union which has aggressive aims. Though the prospect of a new world war is a frightful one, somehow the imperialists have to win their peoples to support their policy. And not only their own peoples, but hundreds of millions in what is now known as the "uncommitted" countries.

This is one of their biggest problems. Not only are they confronted with the growing strength of the socialist world, and serious differences in their own ranks, but with the rising movement of millions in the "uncommitted" countries who are making a determined stand against imperialist domination and refuse to be involved in their war plans. This is a nightmare to the imperialists, but a beacon light of hope for peace-lovers all over the world.

No better time could be chosen than the beginning of a new year to review these new factors in the world situation, their impact on

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

world affairs, and the relation of the growing anti-imperialist movement to the struggle in Britain to end Tory rule and to advance to socialism.

Before the Second World War the majority of peoples were under the domination of the imperialist powers in one form or another. The defeat of fascism, the proved strength of the Soviet Union, and the extension of the socialist world, made a profound impression. This was the beginning of a big change. The sharpest impact was in Asia. Indonesia won its independence in 1945, and in 1947 India became independent, as did Burma and Ceylon. The struggle became more intense in Viet Nam, and in China the liberation movement advanced in leaps and bounds.

The victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949 gave a new impetus to the struggle for liberation, not only in Asia, but throughout the Middle East, and in all parts of Africa.

### The Advance of National Independence

This rapid advance of the liberation movement on a world scale is now recognised on all sides. Within the past decade, one country after another has won its political independence, embracing 1,250 million out of 1,500 million former colonial peoples.

Together with the growing strength of the Soviet Union, the victory of the Chinese Revolution and the heroic struggle of the Chinese volunteers in the Korean war made a powerful impact throughout Asia and indeed the whole world. Korea destroyed the myth of imperialist superiority and brought the Asian peoples closer together. India came into close association with the new China, and speeded the advance from formal independence to actual and open resistance to imperialism.

This prepared the way for the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in April 1955, at which no less than twenty-nine countries (most of them former colonies) representing 1,200 million people were present. Differences existed on many issues, but there was common agreement on their opposition to colonialism, to imperialist war plans and war pacts, and to all forms of imperialist domination. This conference was a new stage in changing the balance of forces in the world today.

Since 1947 it is not only the colonies which have waged the struggle against the grip of imperialism. Former colonies which have won their political independence have raised the movement to a new level. Not only have they given a new impetus to the struggle in the remaining colonies, and raised the anti-imperialist movement to a world scale. They have also reinforced the forces for world peace.

The actual imperialist wars of aggression in the past twelve years have been directed either against the colonial peoples striving for liberation, or to reimpose imperialist domination upon newly independent nations. In Asia it was against Indonesia, China, Malaya, Viet Nam and North Korea. In the Middle East mainly against the Arab countries, the most recent being the invasion of Egypt and the threats to Syria, together with the armed occupation of Cyprus. In North Africa it was centred on Tunis and Morocco, and the three-year ferocious onslaught against Algeria is still going on. In British colonial Africa it was against Kenya, now being strengthened for British military operations in the Middle East.

All the main imperialist powers (United States, Britain, France and Holland), were involved in these wars of aggression, though on occasions they have had conflicting interests. But despite the heavy blows inflicted by the imperialists they have not succeeded in destroying the liberation movements in these countries. On the contrary, not only the growing strength of the socialist world, and the desire for peace in all countries, but the actual *resistance* of the national liberation movements has become a powerful barrier to the plans for a new world war.

The movement is now growing even more rapidly. Early in the New Year the second Bandung Conference will conclude its discussions in Cairo. But the anti-imperialist movement is even wider than the group of Bandung nations. Early in 1958 also will be held a conference of African countries, convened by newly independent Ghana.

All this reveals the new powerful anti-imperialist force that is now growing throughout the world. Peace is not only an issue for the "Great Powers"; it is one that involves the majority of mankind—and womankind. National independence and freedom from colonial oppression is not only an issue for the colonial peoples; it is no less a crucial issue for those millions who have won independence—as it is for the people in the imperialist countries, and particularly in Britain.

These are the main conclusions we can draw from these new factors in the world situation:

1. The anti-imperialist movement now embraces the vast majority of the peoples of the world.
2. The newly independent nations have

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

extended and changed the character of the anti-imperialist movement, which has now become a decisive factor in world affairs.

3. The struggle to achieve and to maintain national independence is inseparable from the fight to ensure world peace and to speed the advance to socialism.

**Attitude of the National Bourgeoisie**

In this new world situation the attitude of the growing capitalist elements in the colonies and newly independent nations who are opposed to imperialism (what Marxists more correctly term "the national bourgeoisie") is of key importance. No struggle for national liberation can be waged without a mass movement (workers, peasants, intellectuals, national bourgeoisie) fighting imperialism as the common enemy, but the actual leadership of the movement depends on the stage of development.

In China, North Korea and Viet Nam the working class, headed by the Communist Party, led the struggle for liberation, welding together all the class forces opposed to imperialism; and after the liberation is now leading the way forward to socialism—in China winning over the former national bourgeoisie to become builders of a new society. In most other countries it is the national bourgeoisie which is in the leadership of the liberation movement, supported by the workers, peasants and broad masses of the people.

Formerly, it was the Marxist view that national independence was only possible with the working class in the leadership of the national movement, but in the past decade experience has shown that it has been won in India and several other countries with the national bourgeoisie in the leadership.

Is this a denial of the leading role of the working class, and does it mean our former conception was based on a false premise? Judged from the standpoint of an *individual* country it would appear so, but this standard of judgment has nothing in common with Marxism. Ever since the 1917 Russian Revolution the struggle for national liberation has been inseparably bound up with the world fight for socialism, and since the Second World War the bonds are even closer.

It is precisely the advance of the socialist world (expressing the leading role and victory of the working class) which has made it possible for the national bourgeoisie to lead the struggle, not only to the achievement of political independence, but forward from there for economic liberation and resistance to all forms of imperialist domination. It is the victory of socialism on a world scale which has made national independence possible in *particular* countries with the national bourgeoisie in the leadership.

The rich experiences in China before and after the 1949 victory serve to emphasise the need for a closer study and analysis of the class forces within the national movement in various countries. Formerly, a simple distinction was made between the big national bourgeoisie (described as collaborators with imperialism) and the medium and small bourgeoisie (described as allies of the national movement). Not only the experiences in China, but the big changes in the world balance of forces in recent years, seem to indicate the need for a new political assessment.

It seems clear that what is decisive is not only the quantitative factor (big, medium, or small) but also the *political* factor—in other words, their economic and political relations with foreign imperialism. In a given situation sections of the "big" bourgeoisie may find its interests lie in opposing foreign imperialism in order to advance its own interests, while sections of the "small" bourgeoisie, feeling themselves in a weak position, could be drawn in as agents of foreign imperialism.

From the experience in China "national bourgeoisie" has now become the term used to specify the *whole* of the national bourgeoisie which takes a stand for national interests and against foreign imperialism. Their term "compradore" or "bureaucratic" for those closely associated with imperialism may not be the best for all countries, but it at least serves to indicate that the main measuring rod is the class structure of a particular country, and the relation of the various classes to foreign imperialism.

There is a striking contrast between India and Pakistan—the first with the national bourgeoisie in the leadership and presenting a determined resistance to foreign imperialism; and the second operating a policy of alliance with United States imperialism. Though Pakistan is formally independent (largely a creation of the British imperialist technique of "divide and rule") it is clear that imperialism has succeeded in forging a limited partnership with the big landlords and feudal elements, together with reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie. But the main elements of the national bourgeoisie seem to be in opposition to the existing ruling forces in Pakistan.

A somewhat similar position appears to exist in Iraq and Jordan, constitutionally independent, but having close ties with foreign imperialism. In striking contrast is the position in Egypt and Syria, where the national bourgeoisie is leading

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the liberation movement, with the firm backing of the masses of the people, and where the big landlords, feudal elements, and reactionary elements of the bourgeoisie depend on the aid of foreign imperialism.

The actual alignment of class forces may differ from one country to the other, but in general the national bourgeoisie in the colonies and newly independent nations is a growing positive force in the advance of the anti-imperialist movement. It has served to extend the scope of the world-wide opposition to imperialism and is a powerful reinforcement to the struggle of the workers and peasants in every country.

At the same time, the national bourgeoisie can never be a homogeneous class force. Though its class interests can coincide with the interests of the masses of the people in the struggle against imperialism, it is also concerned with making bigger profits, and important sections can be won over on occasions by concessions from imperialism.

## Role of the Working Class

That is why the role of the working class (in alliance with the peasantry) in the colonies and newly independent nations is so decisive for the victory of national liberation, and for the further advance to socialism.

The working class is the only consistent class force whose interests lie not only in opposing imperialism but also in defending the daily economic interests of the workers and peasants, and carrying forward the struggle after the achievement of political independence to the transformation of society.

Without the leading role of the working class, headed by the Communist Party, the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949 would not have been possible, much less its subsequent advance to socialism.

Even where the national bourgeoisie lead the national movement to the achievement and maintenance of politcal independence, this is only the first stage. The further advance towards economic liberation, complete freedom from imperialist domination, and the achievement of socialism depends on the working class and its Communist Party coming forward to the leadership of the national movement—a process now evident in India, Indonesia, and Cyprus and elsewhere.

Bearing all this in mind it is none the less important to recognise the positive role of the national bourgeoisie in the present world situation, and to grasp the great opportunities which now exist for extending the scope of the anti-imperialist movement, to achieve further victories of national liberation, and to ensure world peace.

## Economic Liberation and Socialist Aid

Whilst they are taking a stand against the political and military domination of imperialism, the newly independent nations are now conducting a big battle for economic independence. This struggle is equally as sharp as that for political independence. In the words of President Sukarno of Indonesia, in a speech at Djakarta last July: "The fight for economic freedom from imperialism will be as bitter as the fight we had for national freedom." In his fortieth anniversary speech, Khrushchev also emphasised that the newly independent nations "not only seek political liberation, but also strive to get rid of the economic factors which make them dependent on imperialism".

One of the chief aims after achieving political independence is to solve the land problem and transform the economy. This meets with strong internal opposition from the big landlords and feudal elements, and even more from foreign imperialism. So-called economic aid schemes operated by the imperialists are bound up with political strings and mainly serve strategic war aims. They are not designed to create or assist the growth of an independent economy.

Before and since India embarked on its second Five-Year Plan it has met with strong opposition from reactionary elements within the country and from foreign imperialism. Withdrawal of its own sterling balances from London raised a storm in British financial circles, demands to tone down the main features of the plan, or to slow down its pace. This had some effect, but the basic character of the plan remains, with its emphasis on heavy industry, and the development of an independent Indian economy. India is still faced with serious financial problems, but Soviet economic aid has been a powerful factor in surmounting many big obstacles, even forcing the imperialists to advance limited economic aid, without political strings.

On a smaller scale a similar battle is being waged in Indonesia, Egypt, Syria, Sudan, Ghana and other independent countries. Sterling assets held by these countries in London banks are under the control of the British Government. Though it cannot refuse to release them to countries which are now politically independent, all kinds of pressures are being used by British financial circles to prevent them being released or at least to slow down the rate of withdrawal.

Imperialist schemes of economic aid have all

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kinds of political strings and are resented by most independent nations. Britain and the U.S. have turned down every proposal to extend economic aid through the medium of the United Nations, and are only prepared to co-operate in the U.N. schemes of technical assistance—for these provide a medium for thousands of "experts" and "technicians" to secure a footing in the countries which they seek to influence, but provide little or nothing by way of economic development.

On the other hand the Soviet Union reaffirmed its support, at the session of the Economic and Social Council of U.N.O. in October, for the "Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development" (Sunfed) which sets the aim of getting all member nations to contribute 1 per cent of their national income for economic development in the under-developed countries.

For the ten years 1946 to 1955 the total U.S. foreign aid programme came to £20,000 million. This seems a gigantic amount, but in fact 70 per cent of this went to the European countries (almost all of it military aid), 20 per cent to Asia, 8 per cent to Africa and the Middle East and 2 per cent to Latin America. In any case only 7 per cent of the total (£1,400 million) went for economic development. Three-quarters of this went to European countries and only about 20 per cent (£280 million) to the under-developed countries.

Britain's aid to its own colonies during this same period was roughly £170 million, but less than 10 per cent of this was devoted to economic development. In general, Government loans and grants are devoted to what is called "public services" such as power stations, roads, bridges. These provide little or no profit, and do not attract private capital. They are designed to provide cheap transport, water, irrigation and electricity and so make it easier for the big overseas firms to make higher profits in other spheres.

It is in this situation that the offer of socialist economic aid on advantageous terms, without political strings, is a big attraction for the newly independent nations. Soviet long-term loans are offered at 2 per cent and 2½ per cent compared with short-term loans offered by Britain and U.S.A. at 5 per cent to 7 per cent. Moreover the socialist countries are entering into extensive trading relations on far more advantageous terms for the newly independent nations, accepting payment in goods or in the currency of the country concerned.

Of the eighty-four trading agreements which Asian countries entered into during 1956 no less than forty-nine were with the socialist countries, eleven of them with the Soviet Union and China, and thirty-eight with the countries in Eastern Europe. Surveying all the under-developed countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, a report in the London *Times* (October 24th, 1957) states that:

> "The trade agreements between the block [socialist countries] and under-developed countries have risen from only one-third of the total in 1953 to over a half by the end of last August. The total number of agreements has more than doubled to more than 200."

During 1957 Soviet economic aid was extended even more rapidly. In the month of November alone there were three outstanding examples: (i) £35 million loan to Syria; (ii) £45 million loan to India; and (iii) £60 million loan to Egypt—all of them at 2½ per cent and spread over a period of twelve years.

It is clear from this that socialist economic aid has become a powerful factor in the struggle of the independent nations to build their own economies and patterns of trading relations. It serves to undermine the pressure of imperialism on these countries, and to bring them into closer and friendlier relations with the socialist world. And the spectacle of *Sputnik I* and *Sputnik II* circling the planet has given the peoples of the under-developed countries greater confidence than ever in the economic and scientific advances being made in the Soviet Union.

### Is the Colonial System Dying?

What is the impact of all these new factors on imperialism and the colonial system? It is clear that they serve to undermine its foundations, to weaken the imperialists, and to broaden the scope of the anti-imperialist movement. This was underlined by Khrushchev in his speech to the Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U. in 1956. But the phrase "disintegration of the colonial system" has been interpreted, even in Communist circles, to imply the automatic collapse of colonialism. It should be remembered that Khrushchev then went on to emphasise that: "The complete abolition of the infamous system of colonialism is now on the agenda as one of the most acute and pressing problems."

It's on the agenda because it is still a "pressing problem", not an accomplished fact. True, there is a "deep-going crisis of the entire imperialist colonial system", but the imperialists are taking

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new and desperate measures. Its abolition is on the agenda of the day precisely because of the new forces in the world which can achieve this—but *only* if there is a united struggle against imperialism.

Never was the prospect more favourable. New victories for national independence were won in 1957 and there will be more to come in 1958. Early in 1957 Ghana won political independence. In August the Federation of Malaya won a limited measure of independence, and in January 1958 Singapore is due to get limited measures of self-government. British colonies in the West Indies are due to achieve Caribbean Federation in March. And Nigeria has staked a new claim for independence in 1960.

These forced concessions which have been won from imperialism are used by Tory and official Labour leaders to spread the illusion that colonialism no longer exists, and that the "old imperialism" is rapidly dying. But the fact remains that these changes (important as they are) have not altered the basic character of imperialism, the increased drive for exploitation, and its aggressive war plans.

British imperialism has been forced to make concessions in one sphere, but becomes more aggressive in another. The date for Ghana independence was fixed at the same time as the plans for the invasion of Egypt. Soon after came the mass bombing in Yemen and Oman—part of the campaign to extend British imperialist domination throughout the Persian Gulf.

Moreover, the concessions forced from British imperialism depend on the strategic position of particular colonies. Malayan independence is hamstrung because British military control still remains, and Malaya itself is a strategic base in Britain's war plans. This applies also to Singapore. Independence for Cyprus is still denied because of its strategic position for British imperialism, and the Tory Government has told the world that Aden cannot have self-government because it is a key base for the Middle East. And now that Kenya is a main reserve war base Lennox-Boyd has declared that British rule must remain "for the foreseeable future".

British colonies in Central Africa and East Africa (which are under European minority domination) are not only denied self-government, but the vast majority of adult Africans are even refused the right to vote. Even in Ghana, together with Malaya and Singapore, British *economic* exploitation still remains, and the economic grip of British imperialism is still strong in India and Ceylon.

Direct colonial rule is only one aspect of imperialism, and changes in the constitutional relations between Britain and its former or existing colonies (forced upon British imperialism) do not in themselves change the character of imperialism.

Every democratic advance in the colonies has been won in the teeth of bitter opposition from imperialism. Even "constitutions" designed to split and retard the liberation movements have had the opposite effect, presenting new opportunities to raise the level of the struggle. But it *is* the united struggle, not the "constitutions", which has blazed the path towards national independence.

British imperialism is combining more desperate and subtle measures than ever to stem the advance of the anti-imperialist movement. Far from dying a peaceful death, like a wounded beast it will stop at nothing. It may still achieve a temporary advance here and there, and so prolong a decadent system which should have been buried long ago.

Everything now depends on the united struggle of the anti-imperialist forces. Imperialism will not die of its own accord. It will have to be destroyed.

### Imperialism and the Workers

This situation presents a serious challenge to the British people, and in particular the organised Labour movement. The continued existence of British imperialism is not only a menace to the peoples of the colonies and the newly independent nations, but also to the fundamental interests of the British people. Unless the struggle in Britain is seen as one which is inseparable from the whole anti-imperialist movement, there can be no real advance to socialism in this country.

From its foundation in 1920 the Communist Party has consistently advocated solidarity action with the colonial peoples, and to the extent it was able to do so has endeavoured to put this into practice. The 1951 programme of the *British Road to Socialism* marked an advance in combining the the immediate solidarity fight with the perspective of future relations when socialism is achieved in Britain.

The new text of the *British Road* carries forward to a new stage the conception of "a firm alliance" between "the British people, the subject colonial peoples, and all the peoples of the pre-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sent Empire" on the basis of their "common interests". And it is strongly emphasised that this alliance "needs to be built on the common struggle on every issue that affects the colonial peoples".

There should be no illusion that British workers are automatically convinced of the need for this alliance. Within the Labour movement there are still those who believe "we can't do without the colonies"; others who are convinced that "we are already helping the colonies towards self-government and higher living standards"; and a strong trend (even within the Communist Party) of belief that British workers derive economic benefit from colonial exploitation.

It is therefore clear that the creation and development of a firm alliance depends on winning the conviction and understanding that British workers, far from deriving economic benefit from colonial exploitation, have to suffer heavy burdens and lower living standards to maintain imperialism and the existing colonial system.

There is a wide-spread impression that the essence of Lenin's teaching on imperialism was that "British workers live on the backs of the colonial peoples" and this expression can arouse emotion and win applause at enthusiastic meetings. Though this gives vent to feelings of indignation against low living standards in the colonies and is intended to emphasise the need for solidarity action with their struggle against imperialism, it does not coincide with Lenin's standpoint.

### Lenin's Assessment

Lenin focused his analysis on the early symptoms of imperialism in Britain from the middle of the nineteenth century to the First World War. He drew attention to the fact that "neither Marx nor Engels lived to see the imperialist epoch of world capitalism which began not earlier than 1898-1900", but they were still able to discern its earliest symptoms.

Lenin emphasised that one of these important features was that "the receipt of high monopoly profits by the capitalists . . . make it economically possible for them to corrupt *certain sections* of the working class, and *for a time* a fairly considerable *minority*, and to win them to the side of the bourgeoisie" [my italics]. The effect of this was "to divide the workers, to encourage opportunism among them and to cause temporary decay in the working class movement".

His definition of colonial super-profits (from which economic concessions were made to the upper strata of the working class) made it clear it was "over and above the profits which the capitalists squeeze out of the workers in their 'home' country". From all this it is clear it was never Lenin's contention that "British workers live on the backs of the colonial peoples".

With the emergence of capitalist Germany and the United States, Britain was already losing its monopoly of the world market at the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the unskilled workers were now organised, forcing the employers to grant small increases to the lower-paid. It was still possible to bribe the "labour aristocracy" at the expense of the workers, but social concessions were conceded to the workers as a whole through the medium of extended social services. Moreover, early in the twentieth century, a new revolutionary trend (arising from the changed position of British imperialism) was growing in the working class movement. So that in 1916 Lenin was able to point out that: "Opportunism, therefore, cannot now triumph in the working class movement of any country as it did in England in the second half of the nineteenth century."

Writing this in 1916, when there was also an increasing revolutionary ferment on an international scale, it is easy in 1958 to conclude that Lenin was a little too optimistic. But today it is evident that the *economic* basis for opportunism has rapidly declined, though it would be folly to underestimate the *ideological* influence of imperialism still existing within the Labour movement, and the "plums" available for Labour leaders.

Opportunist ideas are not necessarily based on the majority of the working class deriving benefit from imperialism. The *essence* of opportunism is the sacrifice of the majority in the interests of the minority, or grasping immediate benefits at the expense of permanent benefit for the working class as a whole.

Even forty years ago Lenin's general assessment of imperialism was that " . . . the yoke of a few monopolists on the rest of the population becomes a hundred times more severe, more burdensome and intolerable". And this is evident if account is taken only of the rapid growth of arms expenditure. It was just over £20 million at the opening of the new era of colonial expansion in 1875. It doubled that figure in 1897, and in twenty-five years was up double again in 1913. It reached £115 million in 1929, more than

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

double this total in 1938, and came to £770 million in 1949, and is now up to £1,600 million. Even accounting for the fall in the value of the £ since 1875, this is a gigantic increase.

All this is apart from the shattering effect of two world wars, numerous colonial wars, breaking up of homes, and the tragic loss of human lives. The burden has grown heavier in the past decade, and R. Palme Dutt puts the present position in one sentence in his book *The Crisis of Britain and the British Empire:*

> "In place of economic advantage and higher standards, the cost of maintaining the Empire of domination and exploitation is imposing on the masses of the British people ever heavier burdens of taxation, higher prices and lowered standards, colonial wars and the menace of a new world war." (1957 *Revised Edition,* p. 365)

It is essential to get this conviction throughout the Labour movement (particularly within the Communist Party) if we are to succeed in building a firm alliance with the colonial peoples.

In recent years the rising struggle of the colonial peoples has made a big impact on the rank-and-file of the Labour movement. It has given rise to the rapid growth of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, supported by 120 Labour M.P.s, and with affiliations from sixteen trade unions on a national level, and hundreds of Labour and Co-op organisations on a district and branch level.

Within the organised Labour movement itself this rising political interest is having its effect. Within two years no less than three colonial policy statements have been adopted, the latest one on economic aid to the colonies. Though this represents an advance in official Labour thinking (in so far as it recognises the colonies are being exploited) it fails to present the conception of an alliance of the British and colonial peoples to advance their common interests.

Indeed, the emphasis on the need for "more sacrifice and more work" in Britain tends to divert attention from the robbery of the colonial people. At the 1957 Conference a South Paddington amendment urged that the next Labour Government should hand over the assets of British overseas firms to the colonial peoples. The delegate pointed out this was far more than the proposed 1 per cent of Britain's national income. It was strongly resisted by the platform and rejected by the Conference. In other words, official Labour policy is that British workers must sacrifice, but British monopoly firms can go on robbing the colonial peoples.

Of course, loans and credits should be advanced to the colonies and newly independent nations, *providing* there are no political strings and that the aim is to promote industrialisation and the creation of an independent balanced economy. But in its present form Labour's programme does not differ in principle from the existing imperialist schemes. What it does is to divert attention from the real solution—the united struggle to end all forms of imperialist rule and exploitation.

## The United Fight

Marxist economists would do well to review the impact of the colonies on Britain's economic position, the effect of U.S. imperialist domination on Britain's trading relations with all Empire countries. For the record shows that Britain's proportion of trade with the Dominions is declining while the U.S. share is growing, together with a decline in Britain's share of trade with its own colonies. At the same time, a bigger proportion of colonial profits is devoted to capital investment and re-investment, while the military cost of the colonial system (the main burden of which falls on the working class) has rapidly increased.

Even in our political treatment there is still a tendency to treat Britain in isolation from the colonies. This is evident in the discussion on the Marxist theory of crisis, the so-called theory of increasing impoverishment; even in John Gollan's book *The British Political System,* and in the discussions on the forms and methods of British democracy.

In every aspect of our fight in Britain we need to have a clear conception, in theory and in practice, that it is inseparable from the struggle of the peoples of the colonies and newly independent nations against all forms of imperialist domination.

New victories for national independence are being won in advance of the achievement of socialism in Britain, and the whole Labour movement is seriously lagging behind the rapid growth of the anti-imperialist movement. We need to enlarge our vision, eradicate the insular approach to Britain's problems, and recognise that the struggle in Britain is *inseparable* from that of the anti-imperialist movement on a world scale. Only in this way can we make our contribution to ensure world peace, win new victories for national independence, and advance to socialism in Britain.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Secondary School Selection: A Reply to the Intelligence-Testers

*Brian Simon*

CRITICISM of the fundamentals of "intelligence" testing from a Marxist point of view began in 1949, in *Communist Review, Modern Quarterly* and the *Education Bulletin.* After this there was much discussion both of theories and of the way testing upholds the class system of education. In 1950 the Party organised an open conference on "intelligence" testing and its effect on the schools; and in 1952 several hundred people attended a public conference on the secondary modern school at which the question of 11-plus and streaming in junior schools was sharply raised, particularly by parents. The Party's aim was to draw as many people as possible into discussions, to clarify the issues and our analysis, and then to take the conclusions out again to the people in the course of a campaign for a real secondary education for all. It was in accordance with this aim that *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School* (1953) summed up our analysis of testing and selection in popular terms.

This book, which was generally regarded as presenting the Communist case, had its effect on the mounting revolt against 11-plus and has now drawn an answer from psychologists concerned with constructing and administering tests—*Secondary School Selection,* edited by P. E. Vernon (Methuen, 15s.) But before considering this it is worth recalling earlier reactions. It must be remembered that in the late 1940s mental testing and selection seemed to be more firmly fastened on the schools than ever before. Indeed, a leading educational psychologist expressed a general view when he said that psychologists had the answers to all the major technical problems involved in 11-plus selection and the tools for solving any fresh ones which might arise; "the general effect of all this was a fairly widespread feeling of confidence, if not of complacency" (p. 27). How, in this situation, was our case against testing received?

## First Reactions

The first notices showed that it could not be ignored. *The Times Educational Supplement* reviewer (15.1.54), characterising the book as "a formidable indictment of the theory and practice of intelligence testing", concluded that "the case stands up"; that, therefore, the arguments advanced "should draw a reply from the defence, and the reply should be couched in language as comprehensible" as that of the prosecution. In the *New Statesman* (27.3.54) Mr. John Garrett, headmaster of Bristol Grammar School, wrote that the case "deserves respect and demands an answer"; in the *New Era* (organ of the New Education Fellowship, January 1954) Mr. James Hemming said that the book showed "with devastating force that what is left of the theory of tripartitism is a mess of unreality, injustice, distortion and pretence".

Psychologists—or rather psychometrists, that is those concerned primarily with mental measurement—reacted somewhat differently. Dr. A. F. Watts, then consultant to the National Foundation for Educational Research, sweepingly condemned the arguments as misleading and remarked that it was a pity that educational discussion should be brought down "to the tub-thumping level of back-bench party politics"; the main thesis of the book was "too silly to merit rational discussion, except perhaps in the pages of a journal devoted to psychotherapy" (*Journal of Education,* March, April, 1954). Dr. Stephen Wiseman, writing for the *Labour Teacher* (organ of the N.A.L.T., June 1954) professed to find a "grave and fundamental error" which "makes the whole content of the book suspect and does the Communist case more harm

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than good", though when challenged he did not substantiate this point: he concluded, "it is a pity that the book does its job so badly".

On the other hand, Professor P. E. Vernon, professor of educational psychology at the University of London Institute of Education, took a different line. The author, he said, "has taken the trouble to study the technicalities of his subject far more thoroughly than most propagandists . . . and his distortions are remarkably few. He has made a serious case and deserves a serious answer." Apart from this, the time was ripe for "psychologists to get together and attempt to decide how far their instruments are doing harm, and how they could be better employed". Evidently these suggestions, advanced in the *British Journal of Psychology* (June 1954) were taken up, for now, three years later, there comes this survey of testing and selection and attempt to meet "left-wing critics", or what is sometimes inaccurately described as "the left-wing egalitarian point of view". The authors of the report, issued under the auspices of the British Psychological Society, are a group of fourteen, including professors of education and leading psychometrists (of whom one is Dr. Wiseman), who met under the chairmanship of Professor Vernon. Here, on the face of it, should be a very serious answer indeed.

### Attitude of the Psychometrists

In fact the survey marks an attempt by psychometrists to put their house in order in face of sharp theoretical criticism, the practical failings of testing and growing public objection to the whole business of selection. For a long time there has been confusion of thought and divergence of views on such fundamental points as whether a child's Intelligence Quotient normally remains the same and whether "intelligence" is innate; these can no longer be passed over in silence, they have been exposed for all to see and must be resolved. Indeed, since 1952, when it became clear that a child's I.Q. could be considerably raised as a result of coaching, there has been open contention among psychologists, and a growing revolt against the original sweeping theories, particularly among those concerned with experimental psychology. In this situation some psychometrists, as the reactions given above suggest, have been for admitting the justice of criticisms and consolidating the ground on the basis of less far-reaching claims; others have objected to this departure, attempting rather to ridicule criticism and confuse laymen with technicalities in order to hold the old front. It is freely admitted that there were, and remain, some divergences; these, in fact, give rise to contradictory theses in different chapters of this report. But on the whole it seems that the first school of thought, strengthened as it was by the force of popular protest and pressure, has won a victory. Thus, referring to "left-wing" and other radical critics[1] of testing and selection, the report states "we accept some of their arguments, and will attempt to supply reasoned answers to others" (p. 35).

These answers, designed to establish a new base for operations, may be considered under the headings of theory and practice.

## I. CONSIDERATIONS OF THEORY

What were our main theoretical criticisms of "intelligence" testing? Leading psychometrists claimed that they had constructed tests which confirmed the existence of, and accurately measured, an innate quality of mind—"intelligence". This, they maintained, was the key mental quality which determined all intellectual achievement. Since it was inherited at birth and could not be improved, a measurement taken at an early age could accurately predict the future level of intellectual development of any child. Hence streaming and selection of school children according to their "intelligence" were socially and educationally necessary.

Marxist critics pointed out that these claims rested on a series of circular arguments and unproven assumptions. There was no scientific evidence whatsoever that tests measured an innate quality of mind; on the contrary, even internal evidence derived from testing showed that a child's I.Q. did not normally remain constant but changed. Equally there was not, nor could there be, any objective criterion of "intelligence". In fact, when a test constructor set out to make up a test composed of a series of questions he had no scientific terms of reference to guide him; all he could do was to choose the kind of questions which he himself *thought* were good tests of what he *thought* was "intelligence". Thus the very statistical techniques used embodied certain assumptions about the nature and distribution of "intelligence" for which there was no scientific justification. Most of the facts supposedly established about "intelligence" were, therefore, not

[1] cf. A. W. Heim, *The Appraisal of Intelligence* (1954).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scientific findings at all; they remained nothing but assumptions inserted into the tests by the constructors at the outset and then held up as new discoveries at the end. Since tests had been constructed in this way within the framework of a class-divided educational system, the whole conception of "intelligence" was class-conditioned; inevitably, therefore, "intelligence" test results indicated that the middle class tends to be "intelligent" while the working class tends to be stupid.

### Intelligence Tests

How are these points met in the chapter dealing with "intelligence" tests? The writers profess their intention "to set out the arguments for, and the weaknesses of, intelligence tests rationally and impartially, guided by the evidence of scientific research rather than by traditional theories or by appeals to casual observations, hunches or (so-called) common sense" (p. 88).

But they find it difficult to live up to this. In fact, most of the "scientific research" referred to is based on the use of tests which for the most part inescapably include and give expression to traditional theories; theories which, it is clear, have by no means been rejected outright. But, while failing to admit their own partiality, the writers persistently impute bias to their most radical critics by labelling them "left-wing"; so obscuring the essence of criticism which shows objectively the *unscientific* assumptions and procedures of psychometry.

Nevertheless they are forced to concede the major points at issue. Thus, after stating that "the main object of introducing intelligence tests was . . . to provide an objective assessment of ability", the writers admit that "there is no . . . external criterion of intelligence", that therefore tests are made up of "items [which] *appear* to psychologists to involve intelligence" [my italics, B. S.], and that the definition of intelligence can be anything which happens to be convenient—"Our tests can emphasise any aspect of intelligence that we wish" (pp. 96-7, 100).

The corollary of all this, of course, is that the "intelligence" measured by tests can no longer be claimed to be an innate and absolute quality. Though it is nowhere clearly stated that the whole practice of mental testing has for decades been informed by fallacious assumptions, it is inferred that there is no way of producing an objective—that is a scientific—measurement of innate mental powers.

Further, it is admitted that assumptions which are of crucial importance both to the construction and application of tests remain unproven and are upheld solely by the use of certain statistical techniques. But this admission is so damaging that, even while making it, the writers are forced to cover up the issues and give a false impression of the criticisms made. It is worth examining in some detail how this is done, for this is an essential aspect of the attempt to firm up anew the tottering foundations of psychometry.

The conclusion drawn from testing which has the most far-reaching implications is that "intelligence" is always normally distributed. This means that in every population—whatever the differences in social and educational background and the changes in social living that may take place—there is always a given (small) proportion of highly intelligent people at one end of the scale and an equivalent proportion of very dull people at the other; the majority of the population are strung out between these two extremes, tailing off through the moderately clever at one end and the moderately stupid at the other to the two end points of genius and idiocy.

### "Distribution" of Intelligence

Until recently psychometrists claimed that this conclusion had been established *scientifically* as a result of mass testing. Marxist critics pointed out, however, that this finding was simply the outcome of using the particular statistical technique known as the "normal curve". All tests are so constructed that the results *must* fall into this pattern; indeed, a test which does not produce this pattern is considered to be a "bad" test of "intelligence" and so never put into use. Inevitably, therefore, all tests currently used give the same pattern of results but this proves absolutely nothing at all about the existence of "intelligence" in human beings. What it does show, on the other hand, is the ramshackle nature of the whole edifice of psychometry.

Now this is not an easy argument to refute. The point is that, if tests are to be constructed for general use, then it is absolutely necessary to assume that "intelligence" is normally distributed because this is the only way of providing an "independent" yardstick. Once this yardstick is assumed, it is always possible to argue that all tests which produce results conforming to it are measuring the same "thing"—i.e. that they are all really measuring "intelligence". Whatever the cost, then, the dogma of normal distribution must be retained.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So when dealing with this question the authors of the report first throw up a heavy smoke-screen. "Left-wing critics", they write, "rebel against the implication that there is, *and always must be* [my italics, B. S.] a limited proportion of the population with high intelligence". After implying in this way that their critics have an emotional bias against a scientific finding, the writers then admit (so blandly that the uninitiated would never guess the significance of the point conceded) that the rebellion was absolutely justified; that, in effect, this is not a scientific finding at all but merely a useful assumption upheld by a statistical technique. "It is true that no conclusive proof that intelligence is so distributed can be adduced, and that the distribution of the scores of I.Q.s we actually obtain from most tests approximate to the normal type *simply because of the manner in which tests are constructed*" [my italics, B. S.] (pp. 91-2).

### Psychometric Smoke-screen

But then, instead of going on to admit that no conclusions can be drawn from such a procedure —let alone far-reaching social conclusions (for such have already been dogmatically asserted)— the writers then attempt to argue that it is justifiable nevertheless to accept the dogma of normal distribution, that this is a "reasonable" assumption. This they do by reproducing three different arguments all of which have long since been disposed of as irrelevant. (1) Physical traits, they say, like height, tend to be normally distributed so why not "intelligence"? But science does not recognise this kind of argument by analogy, and anyway it can just as well be argued that other physical traits, such as weight and hair colour, are *not* normally distributed. (2) Next they try a purely technical point, that I.Q.s obtained by the Mental Age scoring system do not assume a normal distribution in advance but do give something like it. This has been refuted elsewhere on technical grounds. Here it is sufficient to note that, in the very next paragraph of the report, the Mental Age scoring system (whose serious defects have been analysed earlier) is dismissed as quite "outmoded"; indeed, it is explained, it was only intended for use with backward children and never supposed to be suitable for the ordinary child or the general population! (3) Finally, "common observation suggests that the very bright and the very dull really are relatively rare". This alone, after the specific rejection of appeals to "so-called common sense", indicates a sloppiness of thought which is the reverse of scientific. Yet these are the *only* arguments advanced in favour of a key assumption and technique in what is held to be a genuine science.

### No Innate Intelligence

In fact, the argument that "intelligence" is always to be found in fixed proportions in any population hinged on the belief that it is an innate and unchangeable quality. Once psychometrists admit (as they now appear to do) that "intelligence" can be improved by education, then it is impossible to argue that it must inevitably be distributed among people according to an unchanging pattern. On the contrary, everything depends on the extent of educational and social opportunity. A society which demands much of all its members in terms both of theoretical knowledge and practice, and which accords value to the most varied kinds of activity, will not look like a pyramid with only a few intelligent people at the apex thinking for the rest. In such a society intelligent behaviour will be evaluated, not merely in abstract and academic terms, but in terms of the social tasks set and the measure of success achieved in these infinitely varied activities. Who are the psychometrists to lay down what future tasks humanity will set itself, whether or not these will be successfully fulfilled and by how many people? The trouble is they cannot see things in this light. They are imprisoned within a restricted field of study and reduce the rich and various material of social life to this measure. In effect they can only think of human intelligence in terms of success in the present General Certificate of Education examination under existing competitive conditions.

This is again demonstrated in the discussion of "I.Q. and social class" (pp. 108-10). This opens with the statement that "the complaint of left-wing writers that intelligence tests reflect class differences is irrelevant". And why? Because "most of the abilities we wish the tests to predict are also affected by social class". Of course. In other words all the psychometrists' ideas about "intelligence" and the ways in which it is manifested are socially conditioned, in a class society class-conditioned; which is precisely what Marxist critics, very relevantly, have pointed out. Thus, on the usually accepted criterion of "intelligence" it can be shown (there is a table as illustration) that "large employers" rank high and "skilled manual workers" low. But it is perfectly possible to construct tests which reverse the position of these two classes—as indeed has been

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

done. Such tests, however, are rejected by psychometrists as "not valid" since the results differ from their own.

## Tests and Class Differences

The point is, of course, that formerly psychometrists claimed that their tests measured *pure* "intelligence" (virtually uncontaminated by environmental influences, educational or social); then they affirmed that the middle class tends to be highly intelligent in this absolute sense while the working class tends to be dull. They have been forced to abandon this position and to recognise that, in general, test results reflect class differences. All they can argue now, therefore, is that "intelligence" tests when used for selection may reflect class differences *less* than other sorts of test in individual cases. In the light of this, they suggest, "it would be more logical for left-wing critics to welcome rather than decry them". But this is a strange morality. We should accept an unscientific and anti-educational procedure because it may sometimes operate in favour of individual working class children and enable them to get to grammar schools! Must we suppose, then, if this is their way of looking at things, that psychometrists "logically" uphold "intelligence" tests because they show professional workers to be highly intelligent and provide psychologists with a career?

These are bankrupt arguments. In fact, throughout this report, position after position has to be abandoned. Once it is admitted that tests in use do not test "intelligence" as formerly understood, it becomes necessary to suggest that they measure "academic aptitude" instead. But since they were constructed in an attempt to get at the essence of "intelligence" it must also be recognised that they are full of inconsistencies. Clearly, then, it may be necessary to start again from the beginning and simply try to construct tests which measure "intelligence for grammar school work". Here, yet again, is evidence of the extent to which testing depends on the present set-up. Without the present selective system of education it would be impossible to suggest even this socially conditioned criterion of "intelligence" as a basis for differentiating children.

Nevertheless, in spite of all this relative thinking, an attempt is made to affirm that "facts" gained from research point to a genuine "psychological theory of intelligence" (p. 106). What is this theory? It is significant that no appeal can be made here to any genuinely psychological enquiry in this country about *how* children learn, and how, therefore, they can best be educated. Instead, there is recourse to a theory advanced by the Canadian psychologist, D. O. Hebb, in an interesting but highly speculative book, *The Organisation of Behaviour,* published eight years ago. This book was little noticed in this connection at the time but now appears to provide a solution to a dilemma, an answer to unanswerable criticisms, and it was first popularised here by Professor Vernon in 1955. Briefly, the solution is that there are two "quite different *meanings* of the *word* intelligence" (my italics. B. S.).

## Theory of Intelligence?

Now words do not just spring up and acquire meanings on their own. This is just another way of saying, in the philosophical terminology now fashionable, that it is proposed to advance yet another, purely arbitrary and speculative, interpretation of "intelligence". And this, of course, is what follows. There are, it is suggested, two different intelligences: Intelligence A, which is "innate potentiality or endowment"—this is purely hypothetical and cannot be measured—and Intelligence B, built up on the former "through interaction with the environment". It is Intelligence B, the psychometrists affirm, which we call intelligence in everyday life and "which our tests represent more or less effectively" (pp. 106-8).

This last conclusion is quite inacceptable on the basis of the psychometrists' own case. What they are concerned to measure, on their own admission, is not everyday intelligence but capacity to pass certain examinations after a course in an English grammar school of a particular (and not always educationally desirable) type; and this is quite another thing. But it is important to recognise what is involved in accepting Intelligence B, because this is the new position on which a stand is henceforth to be made. In the first place, it should be said that this definition rests chiefly on the basis of what can only be described as some very sparse experiments, not this time with children and I.Q.s, but chiefly with blinded rats. Almost any conclusion could be drawn from these, though it is doubtful if any would really be relevant to human education. The conclusion actually drawn, however, is one that is badly wanted; namely that innate powers and acquired knowledge become inextricably interconnected from birth to make up educability, and that it is *the very early years that are absolutely decisive* in this connection. Thus, even at the age of five,

> "The level of concept development and thinking shown by a child . . . largely determine his capacity for further intellectual growth. Im-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> proved education or improvements in personality adjustment may alter his educability, but do so to a marked extent only in exceptional cases. Similarly on entry to secondary schooling, the I.Q. tests do give a fair indication of capacity for acquiring advanced education, not because this capacity is truly inborn, but *because it has become more or less established* in the previous 11 years" [my italics, B. S.]. (p. 108).

So, deprived of the argument that the "intelligence" they measure is fixed at or before birth, psychometrists find a new theory; that "educability" becomes fixed, for the vast majority of children, from the age of five. In the light of this new theory they can affirm that it is a very good thing that their "intelligence" tests measure environment and education instead of (as was once hoped) only innate powers; for if they did measure only Intelligence A they would be bad predictors of grammar school success! (p. 108.)

It is almost incredible that argument so doctrinaire should attempt to pass muster as scientific. But there it is. This is the kernel of the case for the defence. It is a theoretical standpoint which is, of course, *of the same order as,* though much weaker than, the one which psychologists have been forced to jettison. It, too, must soon go the same way.

## II. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Besides criticising "intelligence" tests from a theoretical angle, Marxists, together with many progressive educationists, showed the devastating effect of testing on the schools. They argued that there can be no real educational advance until the practice of testing, streaming and selecting is set aside together with the theories which uphold it.

In an earlier chapter of this report, evidently written by another hand, some of these arguments are seriously discussed. Here a genuine attempt is made to approach the question from a social and educational point of view and the nature and outcome of the discussion is, therefore, rather different. In this case the psychological standpoint which informed all the recommendations from the Hadow Report (1926) onwards, for segregating children in different schools and in A, B and C streams within schools, is overtly rejected. "Few nowadays would subscribe to the statement made in the Spens Report . . . 'that, with few exceptions, it is possible at a very early age to predict with some degree of accuracy the ultimate level of a child's intellectual powers' " (p. 42). The question of streaming and selection is, therefore, considered afresh.

On the whole, the chapter honestly stresses the dangers of streaming, accepting the arguments we advanced. "Children who are relegated to a low stream, to suit their present level of ability [we would write: attainment. B. S.] are likely to be taught at a slower pace; whereas the brighter streams, often under the better teachers, are encouraged to proceed more rapidly. Thus initial differences become exacerbated . . ." In general, therefore, the authors agree with us that ". . . the 'freezing' of abilities through streaming is to be deplored", and, though hedging their conclusions around with qualifications, they appear to come down against streaming and differentiation below the age of thirteen. Segregation into different types of secondary school is similarly deprecated. "Any policy involving irreversible segregation at eleven years or earlier is psychologically unsound, and therefore . . . in so far as public opinion allows—the common or comprehensive school would be preferable, at least up to the age of thirteen" (pp. 43-4, 53).

Now these are very important concessions and should be welcomed as such: they can be used to strengthen the struggle against streaming and for the comprehensive school. But two important reservations must be made. Firstly, this standpoint is at variance with the one outlined earlier, which attempts to infer that diagnosis of children's "abilities" is both possible and desirable from the age of five. This dichotomy appears throughout the report, the conservative view coming out particularly strongly in the chapter "The Validity of Selection" where it is argued, once more, on the basis of highly questionable statistical techniques that selection as practised today is highly reliable and accurate. In other words, the more progressive psychologists have as yet only a limited foothold, while a strong rearguard action is being conducted.

### Tests at All Costs

The second point, which follows from this, is that the whole sense of the report is to advance plans for maintaining the practice of testing at all costs, come what may. In short, if selection should go then the psychometrists propose to assert their domination over education in a new way by directing streaming and classification *within the comprehensive school itself.*

Now the Labour movement is concerned to develop the comprehensive school precisely in order to abolish selection at ten and provide the conditions for a real secondary education for all. Implicit in this approach is the radical reduction

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of streaming both in the junior and secondary (comprehensive) schools with the aim of ultimately abolishing it altogether. For instance, Miss Margaret Miles, the head of a large London comprehensive school, in a recent broadcast, strongly opposed the idea of "the division of the school into labelled streams," urging that this does not make "the right use of the continuing opportunity the comprehensive school offers". Children should be arranged in parallel (i.e. unstreamed) groups "pursuing a common curriculum for as long as possible".

But what does the report say on this issue? "We venture to point out that no one, except perhaps a few left-wing enthusiasts, intends to eliminate ability grouping [streaming. B. S.] in such schools". And they follow this up with an agreed conclusion that psychologists "should uphold their claim to diagnose the most suitable form of schooling for not all but a great majority of the children . . ."—in particular, they must be consulted on the "proper allocation" of pupils "to streaming within comprehensive schools"; "if comprehensive schools become general, psychology will have at least as much to contribute to the technique of diagnosis and guidance within such schools as it has to the more restricted aim of accurate selection" (pp. 49, 169).

Now if it were a question of a genuine *educational* psychology concerned to elucidate the inner mental processes involved in learning, the social and emotional aspects of learning, and the practical problems of teaching, then the schools could only profit from any advice proffered. But at present, and obviously in this context, psychology means psychometry—the classification and grading of children by the use of mental tests. This form of activity has nothing whatever to do with the real problems involved in teaching and learning; indeed, by its very nature it operates to *obscure these problems*. It is precisely on the basis of psychometry that psychologists have given what they now admit to be consistently *wrong and harmful* advice, both to educational legislators and to teachers, for over three decades. This advice has helped to maintain in being an obsolete educational structure, has provided "scientific" justification for blighting the prospects of innumerable children, has reduced the efficiency and dulled the enthusiasm of thousands of teachers. One might expect a little humility in the light of this record. But no; instead psychometrists assert their right to continue giving "guidance" using the old techniques, which clearly means a free hand to push outworn ideas and methods on the new schools. To stream *as a question of principle* within the comprehensive school, instead of seeking ways to overcome it by investigating the very real problems of teaching and learning, is to give a new impetus to the very practices and outlook which the comprehensive school is designed to overcome.

## The Struggle Continues

It is clear enough, then, that the struggle against testing is by no means over. Communists, of course, are not so simple as to believe that, because a theory has been shown to be untenable, it will forthwith be abandoned—especially in a field so remote from the exact sciences as psychology is at present. In addition it must be recognised that testing has been deeply entrenched in the schools. It is on this basis that the psychometrists, together with the effort to reformulate exploded theories, insist on the practical convenience of testing. So the writers of this report claim that "our tests are extremely useful"; but they do not stop to ask—to whom? Certainly not to the working class. And it is worth noting here that the new developments in the Soviet educational system, whose achievements are now generally acclaimed, effectively began twenty years ago when the psychometrists were excluded from practising in the schools and offered an opportunity to retrain as teachers. One of the reasons given for this, besides the harmfulness of their theories, was that the teachers and teaching should be put at the centre of the picture, and that the schools should not be run for them by psychometrists. In the same way, British teachers, especially those in comprehensive schools, need to make their own decisions about the school's internal organisation and structure, instead of submitting to "guidance" from outside.

The writers of this report are not, of course, consciously propounding false and harmful doctrines for purely subjective reasons. As professional workers they see it as their job to serve society and its educational system and for the most part they simply do not recognise that to do this unquestioningly in a class society is simply to foster class ends. However, the contradictions are so obvious that attempts to establish this standpoint lead to a rich confusion of thought. Thus, at the very outset of this report the writers affirm that they are concerned "with the techniques that can best be employed given the present set-up. It is not our function to suggest reforms in matters of educational policy . . ." (p. 13). Later they suggest that "the majority" of psychologists "would probably gladly abolish the selection system if there were a practicable and just alterna-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tive", but only in order specifically to reject the views of "many" psychologists who so object to the use of psychological tests in selection that they "have gone so far as to advocate that their profession should 'contract out', and refuse to have anything to do with procedures that have such harmful effects on children's educational and emotional development" (p. 35). This attitude, it is affirmed, is mistaken; psychologists have done much to bring about improvements and can do more. To improve the existing system with a view to making it work better is, one gathers, a sound and politically neutral thing to do; whereas to contribute towards any radical change is mistaken and political. This argument is, of course, typical of the traditional Conservative attitude to social change, as is the remark that "many people might subscribe to the Labour Party's desire to abolish selection of [*sic*] 11-plus, if that were possible. But to assume that it could be done by a stroke of the pen is quite unrealistic. Rather we must think in terms of a programme of gradual change . . ." (p. 14). This, of course, is as much a political standpoint as is the policy of the Labour or Communist Party.

For the Labour movement the lesson to be drawn is clear. It is mass support for an extension of educational opportunity that can be decisive. Much more can, and should, be done to explain all the issues to the people and so to give real leadership to the present scattered and largely instinctive revolt against educational inequalities and frustration, both on the part of teachers anxious to give of their best and parents whose hopes for their children are shattered. The force of popular determination, and the measure of informed criticism there has been, have already led to the defeat of the most reactionary views, and to a retreat all along the front on the part both of psychometrists and those who formerly supported the tripartite system. It is only necessary to bring the theory and practice together, to inform the popular struggle and raise it to a new level, for this retreat to become a rout.

# The Theatre in Britain Today

*Tom Vaughan*

WHEN Miss Vivien Leigh stood in the House of Lords and made her appeal for the saving of the St. James's Theatre, she stood for a moment on the stage of history. Her removal by their Lordships' uniformed flunkeys did not however end the play, but only its prologue. The same day she stood before the TV cameras, and the protest that our rulers could not condescend to hear was transmitted to the firesides of the British people. Both the form and the content of this protest from one of Britain's leading actresses indicated in a most interesting way that the English theatre was at last growing conscious, not only of the character of its own melancholy plight, but of the sort of action needed to save itself from complete extinction.

There is no necessity to elaborate the well-known recital of theatres and music-halls closing or closed; the fantastic level of unemployment in the acting profession; the insecurity of employment in a commercialised theatre and the degradation of artistic standards which is one of its results; the lack of opportunity for dramatists with something worth saying to say it; all these facts have been, and are being, repeated daily, and are known to everyone. It is necessary to note that the English are now, by and large, no longer a theatre-going people. A very large proportion of the population—probably the majority of the younger generation—have either never set foot inside a legitimate theatre, or have been once or twice and then decided that it has nothing to offer them that they feel they need badly enough to make the effort to book seats, and arrive at a set time for curtain-up.

## Decline of the Theatre

This is a process of long development, and lovers of the theatre have been crying "wolf" for several generations now. It must be emphasised

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that today it is no longer a case of "saving" the living theatre. For the vast majority of our fellow-countrymen it died long ago—or has not yet been born. What goes on in the theatres of London's West End is not living theatre. Night after night unfortunate actors go through a listless repertoire of stereotyped tricks in murder mysteries (one interior set with French windows, six characters), upper-middle-class comedies (one interior set with French windows, four to six characters), significant translations from the French or Italian (one interior set with French windows, ditto, ditto); or ever-so-clever intimate revues full of witty sketches about murder mysteries, upper-middle-class comedies, significant translations from the French or Italian, and (of course to show how broad-minded we are) about ever-so-clever intimate revues full of. . . Like the famous Australian bird the bourgeois theatre is in the last phases of Operation Flying-Round-In-Ever-Decreasing-Circles. No wonder it needs fewer and fewer buildings as time goes on! A century of bourgeois domination of the theatre is petering out in a vicious spiral of childish senility. To quote their own T. S. Eliot (and who should know better?) their world (and its theatre with it) is dying not with a bang but with a whimper. The mass of the British people have seen little to regret in this event, but it is a worrying business because the degradation of a noble English tradition no less than the physical destruction of the buildings needed for its re-creation are its much more serious end-effects. But in the war and post-war years it has become possible to see a way forward. Some faltering steps have been taken in the right direction; and, what is more important, increasing numbers of people in the theatre (who are, at first anyway, the ones who matter most) are beginning to recognise it as the only one that will save their profession and our theatre, once the greatest in the dramatic history of mankind. Let us consider some of the distinguishing features of the situation of today.

Undoubtedly the English theatre has been profoundly affected by the realisation that there is a world beyond the English Channel where things are ordered very differently. Miss Leigh had just returned from Poland and Yugoslavia, where theatres are not being destroyed but built, and the actor is one of the most honoured and best-rewarded servants of society. 1955 and 1956 were especially fruitful years, bringing to our theatres a host of Continental visitors, and in particular several ensembles from the countries of socialism. Just how deep was the impact of, for example, the Chinese Classical Theatre, the Bolshoi Ballet, Brecht's Berliner Ensemble, and the Théâtre National Populaire of Paris, can be seen from the fact that neither the Hungarian events nor the use that was made of them by various people were able to prevent the continuation of the exchanges and contacts started at that time. A great flood of new life entered Britain's theatre; however much the Government tries to turn off the tap the flow will go on. You cannot convince a man dying of thirst that water is not good for him. The initiative has passed now from Government to private hands; it is the capitalist impresarios who are trying to get us the Moscow Arts Theatre and the Kirovsky Ballet; it was officialdom which prevented the visit of the Leningrad Symphony Orchestra to Edinburgh. The British people desperately need what the socialist theatre has to offer, and we must now consider the special characteristics which make it differ from English theatre —not so much in theory as in fact. I make this proviso deliberately because I do not intend to discuss "Socialist Realism or what the Russians ought to do" but to attempt to see and draw conclusions from what they actually *are* doing.

## Socialist Theatre

Here then, as I see them, are some of the main characteristics of present-day socialist theatre, both from the countries of socialism, and as exemplified by those groups from capitalist countries who are successfully practising the same methods (T.N.P., Theatre Workshop etc.)

The content of socialist theatre is humanist, progressive and optimistic. Its highest expression is in the work of Brecht, although so far the socialist world is less influential as a producer of progressive dramatists than the U.S.A. It should be noted that the greatest strength of the socialist theatre is in the historical sense of their best producers and actors, enabling them to breathe warmth and meaning into the classics without the easy descent into sensationalism and vulgarity so common in our classic theatre. Instances are their work on Chekhov, the Bolshoi *Giselle* and *Romeo and Juliet,* and especially their Shakespearian films.

In the field of technique, socialism reigns supreme. It is worth noting that the growing refinement and sophistication of industrial civilisation have sharpened and refined the people's taste in dramatic entertainment. It is not for nothing that the American film industry now

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

relies for its stars not on the Rudolf Valentinos and Theda Baras but on the Stanislavsky-trained Marlon Brandos and Gregory Pecks. A public used to the results of *The Method* will not be satisfied with acting or production that is shoddy or amateurish—and that is precisely the description of West End acting and production today.

To produce the illusion of reality that is needed to convince an audience that it is participating in the lives of the characters they see on the stage the following are the basic technical prerequisites (granting, of course, a reasonable supply of talent among the performers—a commodity not in short supply in any country, least of all ours):

Total dedication to the discovery of the "truth" in the characters and situations presented.

Total dedication to the acquisition of the technical means to present that truth convincingly under the conditions of stage performance to a theatre audience.

The constant work in a *collective* of theatre workers which alone can result in a truly satisfying and integrated presentation of the total product—the play.

## Collective Work

Acting is *team* art. No one would expect Britain to win the World Cup at soccer with eleven players picked at random from different clubs of different standards and styles (perhaps that is why we haven't won it); but our West End managements, if they ever thought it worth their while to try, would undoubtedly attempt *King Lear* with the usual allowance of two to three weeks' rehearsal for a scratch collection of actors, producers, and stage crew, none of whom had possibly ever seen each other before the first read-through. The results of real team-work dazzled the eyes of our theatre profession in the work of Brecht's Berliner Ensemble, the Chinese Classical Theatre, and the Bolshoi Ballet. Note, please, that none of these groups employed a realistic or "easy" style; each worked through a set of studied, and in some cases extremely artificial conventions; yet the total effect was in each case the same—the apprehension of *truth*—that elusive sword that can flash from behind the footlights, and pierce the hearts of an audience. This is the purpose of drama—to make people laugh and cry about themselves, the "catharsis" of Aristotle.

Now, this collective work is not a luxury. We cannot say that group theatre is better than non-group theatre, *ergo* socialist theatre is better than non-socialist theatre. This would be entirely untrue. The truth is that there is *no* theatre that is not group theatre, and that, because of its destruction of the economic basis of group theatre, capitalism has well-nigh destroyed the theatre altogether. Even under the stultifying conditions of the West End, the better actors, producers and technicians manage to cohere and work together with varying degrees of success; there are even some groups that have managed to get on terms with their environment by exploiting some special "gimmick"—such as the Aldwych farce group of the nineteen-thirties, the Whitehall Theatre group of today, or the Crazy Gang. But this, to put it mildly, is group theatre at a pretty low level, and we need better examples. In our own history the best is undoubtedly that of Shakespeare's own company, the Lord Chamberlain's and King's Men, although we can add today Theatre Workshop and the English Stage Society; and, some way behind, the Old Vic, the Stratford Memorial Theatre, the Bristol Old Vic, the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, and the Liverpool Repertory Theatre. And for team-work pure and simple we can point to our amateur movement — undoubtedly the most widely-supported and active in the world—which flourishes, as apart from simply existing, on practically nothing else.

Let us draw the moral. Shakespeare's company was financially self-supporting—indeed most of its members, including Shakespeare himself, made a lot of money out of it, and were able to retire rich men. None of the modern examples quoted, in this country or any other, are able to exist without outside support—from state, municipality, public or private subscription. Playing to full houses every night, the Comédie Française still requires a state subsidy equal to one-third of the Arts Council grant for all the arts for the whole of Britain.

There is no answer to this along customary capitalist lines. The truth of the matter is that group theatre (or, just simply, the theatre) is a handicraft guild activity appropriate to the conditions of Tudor England, when it flourished along with other activities of the same type. Its economic basis was destroyed by the Industrial Revolution; but while industrialisation was a far better way of producing manufactured goods than handicraftsmanship, it was a far worse way of producing art; in fact, no way at all. Robbed of his social basis and his economic security, the artist has lost touch with the living problems which are the raw material of his work; robbed

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of purpose, he has lost the spur to learn to handle the tools of his job. On top of this, mass-production and industrial civilisation have violently and suddenly distorted the pattern of social and family life, and filled the world with ugliness and frustration. This great upheaval—far deeper and more shattering than that which prompted the work of Aeschylus or Shakespeare—was not yesterday, but is going on around us *now*, in the countries of socialism just as much as those of capitalism. Everywhere today men are being forcibly urbanised by the processes of history; the old patterns of family and social life change almost hour by hour; there is an acute spiritual crisis facing twentieth-century man which should form the raw material of a school of drama greater even than that of Greece and of the European Renaissance.

### Progress or Chaos?

It is time now to look at the plays themselves and the dramatists we need to write them. Again the ideal is a collective where the dramatist is a practising theatre worker able to test his ideas on the anvil of rehearsal and performance; preferably where he is an actor himself. The examples are legion; Shakespeare, Molière, Ibsen, to name only three of the greatest. But the group will only produce significant drama if it is a group with a consciousness of its political role. The group which has become the repository of dead traditions must be opposed and fought by the group striving to say something about contemporary problems in a contemporary way. Groups arise, struggle, achieve something of their aims, attempt to rest on their laurels, are opposed and superseded by new groups. Such is the dialectic of artistic progress. *But* the achievements of each movement are the spring-board of its successor and supplanter. This is the difference between progress and chaos. It is because industrialism has made it almost impossible for the artist to devote himself as he should to the acquisition of the technique of his trade that we have today pictures painted by artists who cannot paint, books written by writers who cannot think, plays written by playwrights who cannot feel, and acted by actors who cannot act. It is not their fault; most of them do their best; but if we compare present poverty with the incredible wealth of the Renaissance we can see the answer. Nurture the artist; restore to him his rightful place in society, and he will learn and do his job.

Already one group theatre has produced a major European dramatist, the first to exploit all the resources of the modern theatre to progressive social ends—Bertolt Brecht. The U.S.A.—let no one forget the Federal Theatre project of the depression years—leads the English speaking world. Arthur Miller and even Tennessee Williams are a vast improvement as a source of theatrical inspiration on Anouilh, Betti, and Beckett, only yesterday the beau idéal of our intellectuals. Australia has weighed in with the best play seen in London last year — *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* and now at last things are beginning to stir in Britain.

### Necessary Steps

It is unfortunately only too easy for active political workers to sneer at the "Angry Young Men". This is a disastrous sectarian mistake. *Look Back in Anger* is far from a perfect play, but it is without any doubt at all the most popular and most important English theatrical work of this generation. Its popularity among the working class is not its least remarkable feature. The reason is that for all its faults it puts a real world, populated by real present-day characters with real present-day problems, on the stage. John Osborne learned his job in a group theatre—the English Stage Society.

So, whatever temporary expedients may be necessary from time to time (and the saving of our dwindling stock of theatre buildings for their proper purpose is undoubtedly one of them) the long-term objective *must* be the establishment of conditions under which groups of theatre workers can exist and work in security. Communists and Socialists must beware of vociferating that such conditions can only exist in a socialist society; not only would this be a dangerous sectarianism antagonising possible allies and inhibiting further advance; it is not even true, as the examples of German music, Italian opera, and French drama can prove. It is widely accepted today among people of all parties and no party that state and municipal support is necessary for the maintenance of such social services as medicine, hygiene and sanitation. It is becoming accepted that the same principle should be extended to the Arts; a principle which has been officially conceded by the establishment of the Arts Council. It will be when the first borough or city council builds its own theatre and appoints its artistic director with a permanent company round him that we shall be able to say that the first real step has been taken on the right road. The support currently given to Theatre Workshop by West Ham Borough Council and to Unity Theatre by

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

St. Pancras Borough Council show, moreover, that this step need not be so far off in the future as some pessimists suppose.

## Political Plays

A word about "political" plays. The business of drama is with human beings in conflict with each other and with society; *but* the social conflict must be expressed in terms that are universally accepted and understood. This usually means their expression in some personal form; the struggle between good and evil personified in the conflict between hero and villain, for instance. In the highest forms of drama this conflict is often an internal one, perhaps within the character of the hero. It can be expressed in argument but it *must* be solved in action. The real conflict in *Hamlet* is an internal one, but we only listen to Hamlet's soliloquies because we are wondering what action they will lead to; will or will he not commit suicide, will he or will he not obey his father's orders? And do not forget that these are the sort of problems about which we felt keenly *before* we entered the theatre; and still it takes the world's greatest dramatist writing at the top of his form to make an interesting play out of them. How much more difficult to write a masterpiece about the suspension of H-bomb tests, or the Rent Act, or about Hungary! This is not to say that such plays should not be written; but that no amount of sincerity and intense feeling is a substitute for good dramatic construction, character-drawing, and effective "speakable" lines.

I cannot conclude without mentioning the cinema and TV. In opposition to many bourgeois jeremiahs I believe they have both had a preponderatingly good influence on the modern theatre. First of all they have (especially TV) provided a reservoir of employment for the acting profession; and secondly they have, on the whole, kept a love for the theatre alive among the population, in particular accustoming them to high standards of production and acting which they now have a right to expect from the legitimate theatre. It must also not be forgotten that two of the best dramatic works seen in Britain in the last two years — *Marty* and *Twelve Angry Men*—were American films developed from television plays, TV and the cinema are allies of the theatre, not its enemies. Nothing can kill the theatre except the theatre itself. Bad plays, bad acting, bad production; these are what keep the people out of the theatre. Blaming anybody else is the alibi of the bad workman who cannot handle his tools.

I will conclude by some proposals for immediate action. They are not very "revolutionary" but they are capable of mobilising very wide support *at once;* and can lead us at least towards the starting-point of the advance on our main objective—municipal or state theatres in every town, publicly financed travelling theatres in the country-side, an amateur movement with professional standards of technique, enthusiasm, sincerity, and contact with the world outside the theatre.

## What Needs to be Done

We must consolidate and defend the positions already won; especially such organisations as Unity, Theatre Workshop, and the English Stage Society. We must fight for more money for the Arts Council—much more than its own much too modest demands. We must fight for the wider and more democratic application of its support; the slogan "Few but Roses" must be consigned to the dustbin. It is fantastic that Theatre Workshop, whose fame is international, should receive no Arts Council money except under absurd and impossible conditions; yes, the Arts Council must be reformed. We must fight for the extension of municipal responsibility. The 6d. rate is waiting to be spent—on what better could it be spent than a municipal theatre? This is one of the fields where cohesion between the amateur and professional theatres can be fought for; the great gulf that is too often fixed is a fatal weakness to the work of both.

We must look around for new openings, especially in London. There is surely scope for another one or two group theatres in this enormous city. South London, in particular, is a theatrical wilderness. The possibilities of a combined amateur and professional basis for such groups might well repay investigation.

Lastly, *political* work means, in this instance, winning support for the theatre in the Labour movement (this starts, but does not by any means finish with support for Unity Theatre); and winning more and more theatre workers for the sort of direct action so well demonstrated by Vivien Leigh.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# Atlantic Broadside

*Ivor Montagu*

Milovan Djilas: *The New Class, An Analysis of the Communist System.* (Thames & Hudson. 21s.)

THE revelations of shameful actions during the last days of Stalin, disclosed at the Twentieth Congress of the U.S.S.R., the errors in Poland and worse in Hungary, made plain by the events of some twelve months ago, have led to a deep disquiet and much reconsideration among Communists. Naturally, advantage has been taken of this situation to attack more vigorously the whole fabric of views and conclusions on which Communism itself is based. The publication of this book is an open part of this offensive. It is issued by a self-proclaimed "Atlantic Press" and printed in U.S.A. The intention is plain. It is: to deliver a cold war broadside, with the more penetrative power—it is clearly hoped—since the explosive evidence allegedly emanates from within. Nevertheless, this purpose and pedigree by no means exempts us from carefully examining the material in question.

## A Minor Mystery

The author was a Communist. He held high office in Yugoslavia, was expelled from the Yugoslav Communist Party, imprisoned and this year retried on new charges, having his sentence increased. His book is presented to us without any confirmatory recommendation of any kind. There is only the rather disquieting note: "The Publishers wish to express their gratitude for editorial assistance to Mr. Morton Puner and Mr. Konrad Kellen", with no hint of the extent of the "assistance" or the limits of the word "editorial" in this context. This is important because, as it stands, the book is so intemperate as to destroy any weight its argument could possibly have possessed. It is invective, not reasoning, and if genuine as implied, belongs to the realm of pathology rather than sociology.

A minor mystery of the text is its date of completion. It was presumably written after Poznan (page 91) and after Suez (page 200). The reference to the latter, as a "struggle . . . [which] could hardly be kept from turning into strife between the two systems" must have been written after the outbreak of hositilities, for this description could not have been applied to the earlier (summer) phase. (Incidentally, with typical mealy-mouth where imperialist aggression is concerned, the author describes it in the following strange terms, as essentially "a dispute between Egyptian nationalism and world trade which, by a coincidence, happened to be represented by the old colonial powers of Britain and France".) But there is no mention of the Hungarian events. When exactly could anything have been written, or was there time to write anything, *after* the Suez fighting but *before* the Hungarian outbreak? Perhaps the editorial assisters could explain.

It would be unreasonable to chide them for such locutions as "different than" or even (once) "different with"; a certain sort of American seems to regard the spurning of the usual English preposition as a duty of national pride. Assistance, if really scholarly, might have got right the generally employed English titles of such books as Lenin's *Imperialism, Left-Wing Communism* and Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy*. But whence comes the conjunction "force and violence" repeated again and again throughout the text though either noun would serve sufficiently for the sense? No doubt happy coincidence made this keystone phrase of the repressive MacCarthyite laws against the U.S. Communist Party the best translation of whatever expression Djilas himself used in the original Serbo-Croat.

The Djilas condemnation of Communism is sweeping and complete. Not only is there nothing good about it, no positive achievement to its credit of any kind, but its evils are not the consequence of chance or error, they are intrinsic to its nature, inescapable. Every crime in the cold war catalogue, every sin of which Communism has ever been accused, reappears in the catalogue. Totalitarianism, intolerance, repression, bloodshed, dogmatism, hypocrisy, corruption, "centralism"—all the current cant. All would be well in the world, without Communism; it is the present obstacle to peace. Marxism is a "so-called

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

philosophy"; the author cannot mention either Marx or Engels without sneering at their limitations and unoriginality, either Lenin or Stalin without condescending pity for their illusions and the utter disappointment of their expectations.

### Fact or Fiction?

The vehemence becomes frantic, irresponsible. The target is maligned at one and the same moment for opposite deeds. On page 125 Marx and Engels "proceeded practically unaware of the most important minds of their time", thus demonstrating their narrowness, but on page 126 they "carefully noted the significant intellectual phenomena of their time", for we are now to be convinced that they were guilty of plagiarism. A large part of the text is devoted to proving that Communism has created a bureaucracy and owes its stability to those it thus privileges. This does not prevent the author from telling us (page 116) that the standard of living of white collar workers in Yugoslavia has declined since capitalist days. When Djilas desires to prove communist economics a failure (page 121) he tells us: "Planned production on a large scale [mass exchange of goods by trade.—I. M.] in co-operation with other countries has not been attained." When he writes to berate the U.S.S.R. for enforcing its will on its associates, and the rulers of the latter for their subservience (page 182), "This is being accomplished by means of mutual planning in important branches of economy, in which the local Communist Governments today mainly voluntarily concur." If we had hoped that a work criticising the fundamentals of Communism by a man until lately responsible and influential might give us matter hitherto unknown on which to base our judgments, we are in for disappointment. With the exception of a single and not very exciting remark said to have been made by Stalin, there is not a single fact or figure not accessible to anyone working in an ordinarily well equipped library. Of revelations from behind the curtain —not an ounce, not a sausage. There is even one incredible page (115) when, to illustrate the author's thesis about the economy of the Soviet Union, he cites as his authorities, in quick succession: André Phillipe "in the *New Leader*", Edward Crankshaw "who is close to the British Labour Party", Harry Schwartz, "the *New York Times* expert on the Soviet Union", and the *Tribune* "representing the point of view of the British Labour Party's left wing". Four Daniels come to judgment, indeed.

### Unreality Unlimited

The unreality even goes further. The world of Djilas is one in which black, at time, changes places with white, and facts are either blandly adduced in illustration of the opposite to what, in fact, they imply, or stated as their contraries to sustain the wanted implication. A friend of mine used to tell an anecdote of his father, a Jewish business man who fled from Russia at the time of the Revolution. In the between-war years this worthy made, and in turn lost, several fortunes, the successive misfortunes being due to his consistent backing of a belief that the Bolsheviks were sure to fall at any moment. "I thought you said that the regime could not possibly last," his son expostulated some time in 1945. "Well, and did it?" was the unperturbed reply. Something of this sublimity characterises Djilas. To prove the unpopularity of the system in U.S.S.R. ("Communist totalitarianism leads to total discontent, in which all differences of opinion are gradually lost, except despair and hatred"), Djilas tells us, without batting an eyelid, that "When the Germans first attacked the U.S.S.R., there seemed to be little desire for resistance among the Russians" and adds, in defiance of texts that millions remember and anyone interested can check, "During the entire war Stalin did not mention either the Soviet Government or its socialism to the people." To prove the failure of Soviet national policy he tells a world, tens of thousands of whose youth have just have just had unforgettable contact with the glowing reality of the multi-hued Soviet family of nationalities, "The various nations, each of which once had its own form and colour, its own history and hopes, stand virtually still now, grey and languid, beneath the all-powerful, all-knowing, and eventually non-national oligarchies", and adds for good measure, "Who knows anything nowadays about Ukrainian writers and political figures?" Alas, poor Korneichuk and Dovzhenko. "Wages and working conditions," declares Djilas, sweeping away with one fine gesture what I seem to remember as a mountain of awards to shock brigaders and Stakhanovites, "are determined . . . with little or no regard for the actual results of production. . . ." This "leads inevitably to lack of interest on the part of the actual producers, i.e. the workers", and, still further down the slippery slope, to the rock-bottom reached by Allan Dulles, who presumably founds his intelligence on this sort of intelligent information. "It also leads to low quality of output, a decline in real productivity and technical progress, and deterioration of plant." (This decline—page 108—

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

does not prevent the statement—page 134—that "technology is advanced", of course "in spite of the fact that a bureaucratic system made it difficult to adopt innovations", for here the author is concerned to point the deadening effect of Communist "tyranny over the mind", he is therefore concerned to admit "technical progress" in order to insist that "in spite of" it, "it is a fact that no great modern scientific discovery has been achieved. . . .")

After all this we can hardly be surprised to learn that it is a characteristic of Communist leaders that they "must also tend to personal extravagance" (p. 81); that the Soviet Union had to fight Hitler unassisted ("If Stalin had not had imperialistic aims in his foreign policy and tyrannical aims in his internal policy, no grouping of powers would have left his country standing alone before the invader," p. 116); that history disproved communism and justified reformism because "the degree of political and economic progress made revolution unnecessary" in, of all countries in the world, Germany (just as though Hitler had never existed and the Third Reich been just a dream) (p. 9); that "certainly the monopolies play an important role in the politics of the Western countries, but in no case is the role as great or the same as before the First World War, nor even as before the Second World War" (p. 213). According to Mr. Djilas (p. 199) not only has Britain "carried out nationalisation", yet more, or, as he says, "moreover, the United States is carrying out nationalisation as well, on an even vaster scale, not by changing the form of ownership, but by putting a considerable portion of the national income into the hands of the Government." This is to prove, of course, that such desirable aims as Communists proclaim need not be actively or, as he calls it, "deliberately" pursued. He goes one better than the farmer who, confronted with the hippopotamus, shook his head and affirmed, "There's no sich animal." Mr. Djilas takes us to the zoo, leads us to the cage, points at the hippopotamus, and says: "There, what did I tell you? See that lovely swan."

## The Djilas Thesis

I will try to summarise exactly for the reader the thesis of the Djilas book. The revolution in Russia was different from all previous revolutions. Whereas formerly when each revolution occurred a new class had built up a mode of production ready to replace that operated by the former tenants of power as soon as these were displaced —e.g. the bourgeoisie were there, ripe to complete industrialisation as soon as, so to speak, it broke out of the feudal chrysalis—there was no class ready to carry out industrialisation in Russia and therefore the Party had to become such a class. The magnitude and character of its task of industrialisation could only be carried out, in such a situation, by authority, disciplined and severe. Hence the Party must own everything, it becomes a "New Class" of owners. It must control everything. There can be no place for democracy, control is by a rat-race of cliques, neither opposition nor criticism can be endured. The Party becomes the state. To make its rule stable, this new class must reward its own members. In doing so it exploits the masses, impoverishes them, deepens an unbridgeable gulf between itself and the people. All imperfections flow from this, they cannot be cured, but can only worsen, and objectively dictate dictatorship.

It is thus the essence of Communism that it must control and embrace everything. It must embrace and crush nationalities and strivings for independence. These react antagonistically, so to propitiate them Communism has invented National Communism. But this is impossible, a contradiction in terms; Communism will fall if it does not make such concessions and fail if it does—National Communism is therefore Communism in decline. So long as Communism remains, even as a decaying system, it remains, by its constitution of a separate market (tantamount to economic aggression) the chief obstacle to peace. Progressive mankind does not require it even for the sake of its aims, for modern Western society is in any case moving towards socialism through state capitalism, as fast as necessary; monopoly capitalism has lost its power and, in so far as it remains operative today, its tendencies even advance the great subject of man's longing, corresponding to his present historical need, the unification of mankind. As Communism is at present the chief, the book almost appears to say the *sole* considerable, obstacle to this consummation, Communism will inevitably disappear—the sooner, and with the less fuss, the better.

It will be seen at once that this thesis represents a cunning attack, coherent in terms of its own logic, independent of reality, and touching upon spots felt as sensitive by Communists in the light of recent or recently revealed events. If the defects of Communist practice can be shown to be neither wilful nor accidental, but intrinsic, if the aims of Communism—instead of being attacked openly—can be shown as unrealisable

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Communists and on the way to speedy realisation by their opponents, what better means of isolating Communists and disheartening them? Yet the falsity that pervades the entire work, the remoteness from reality of both its sweeping generalisation and its detail, but above all the fallacies that lie at the heart of the thesis and of which its author cannot be unaware, so utterly discredit both the book and those political commentators who have hitched their wagon to praising it, that its effect upon honest minds can only be opposite from that intended.

## Capitalism Whitewashed

It has not been hard to show, by sample citation, that the picture of facts set out to warrant the thesis is distorted to the point of fantasy. Nor would it be difficult to show the scrupulously partial character of the presentation. For all his wrath, the author has been less concerned to denigrate Communism by what he denounces than to whitewash the Western cold war side by what he omits from his world picture. Not one word is said, from beginning to end, that could offend or embarrass the most rabid defender or even advocate of imperialism and capitalism in respect to a single one of the issues at present under great debate. Ford, Onassis, Nuffield, Adenauer, Dulles (both Dulleses), MacCarthy, Malan—there is not a jot here for any one of these to quarrel with. All the woes of the world spring from a forest of Communist beams; if there be any motes among its adversaries they are clearly too minute to mention. Yet neither of these features of the book of themselves necessarily rebut the thesis. What invalidates it is that it has a hole at its kernel.

Djilas has entitled his book *The New Class*. It is that idea that is central. According to him the people do not own, nor the working class; the Party, or even a clique of the Party, have become the new owners. This conception is crucial for him, without it the whole edifice falls to the ground. It is no accident that he chooses the word "class", for as an ex-Communist he must know that the effect of his doing so will be pejorative, that is to say, it will foster discredit among the workers. How does he justify this term? Curiously, not by Marxist categories, but by Roman law. The point is worth quoting (from p. 44):

> "As in other owning classes, the proof that it is a special class lies in its ownership and its special relations to other classes. In the same way, the class to which a member belongs is indicated by the material and other privileges which ownership brings to him.
>
> "As defined by Roman law, property constitutes the use, enjoyment and disposition of material goods. The Communist political bureaucracy uses, enjoys and disposes of nationalised property."

Djilas knows that, to a Marxist, the special relations of a class to other classes involves much more than this. It involves intrinsic antagonism. Compare the class war, which, to a Marxist is not the product of the more and more conscious defence actions of the proletariat, nor (even) of the deliberate greed of the bourgeoisie, but the intrinsic outcome of a production relation in which the process of production itself tends to oblige the owner to increase the rate of exploitation of labour, and self-preservation as well as natural aspiration for betterment tends to encourage the employee to struggle to reduce it. Clever Dick, by his sea-lawyer reasoning, thinks he will induce the reader to suppose the same antagonism to exist between his "new class" and the mass of the people.

## Classes and Socialism

But there is, in fact, under socialism, no such relationship as could predicate this antagonism. Under capitalism, the owning (and ruling) class from time to time buys off and appeases the demands of the working class made in the course of the class struggle, but the intrinsic nature of the relationship continually obliges it to recoup itself and restore or augment the rate of exploitation by other means open to it. This is the law of this form of society, and constitutes the relationships that enable the truthful use of the word "classes". The production relations under socialism involve no such antagonism. There is no return of wealth to capital owners *as such*. The product is divided directly among the producers by consumption, or indirectly by capital investment or investment in security (the need for the latter is not intrinsic to socialism as such but intrinsic to the maintenance of socialism in a capitalist, and therefore hostile, environment). Certainly the division may be erroneous, and too little at any time be devoted to consumption (this is one of the causes of conflict within socialist society envisaged as possible by Mao), but it is not intrinsic to socialism, only an error of management under it; not an intrinsic interest of the administration or the Party, but against its interest and in its interest to remedy. Without daring to bring this weakness of his theory out into the open, Djilas seeks to obviate the necessity

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for doing so by simply choosing a label that implies antagonism and thence jumping to the assumption that, because of this antagonism, the bureaucracy must bribe its members with advantages to keep on its side, and that this creates an exploitatory division of production, and hence an intrinsic antagonism. Q.E.D. A perfect circular argument, slipped in by nearly invisible sleight-of-hand. See further how, characteristically, he seeks to confirm his argument by recital of the opposite of the facts. The paragraphs already quoted from page 44 continue:

> "If we assume that membership in the bureaucracy or new owning class is predicated on the use of privileges inherent in ownership—in this instance nationalised material goods—then membership in the new party class, or political bureaucracy, is reflected in a larger income in material goods and privileges than society should normally grant for such functions. In practice, the ownership privilege of the new class manifests itself as an exclusive right, as a party monopoly, for the political bureaucracy to distribute the national income, to set wages, direct economic development, and dispose of nationalised and other property. *This is the way it appears to the ordinary man who considers the Communist functionary as being very rich and as a man who does not work.*" (I. M.'s italics)

## Unsupported Assertions

But it is nonsense to say that this is how the Communist in such a country appears to the ordinary man. And, in fact, does the "new party class or political bureaucracy"—to adopt Djilas's term—really receive a greater share of goods and privileges than society should normally grant for such functions? Djilas asserts it and asserts it, indeed he founds his whole case not merely upon the fact that it is so but that it necessarily must be so. But never a word of analysis or shred of statistics is adduced in support of this contention.

All Communists are conscious, let us hope the Twentieth Congress has made them all really more conscious than they were, of the possible pitfalls on the road to socialism. They perceive with clearer eyes the difficulties, mistakes, crimes capable of arising and multiplying from undue privilege of bureaucracy, suspension of legality, faults in the democratic process. We are learning lessons, exploring and correcting. The Djilas method, however, is not to explore faults, but to exploit them. To present them magnified and distorted beyond all semblance, and totally abstracted from the forty years of unending imperialist menace and pressure that provides their formative context in the world of reality.

In one passage Djilas (page 117) says: "Of course, once-backward Russia has attained second place in world production as far as its most important branches of the economy are concerned, it has become the mightiest continental power in the world. A strong working class, a wide stratum of technical intelligentsia, and the materials for consumer goods production have been created." He concludes the paragraph by saying that there are no reasons to believe that the standard of living cannot be improved in proportion to the country's economic capabilities. Djilas only makes this admission in order to argue, in the preceding paragraph, that the progress achieved is "not justified" economically because "other branches" are backward; and in the following one, that the improvement of the standard of living is being continuously postponed by the "exclusive monopoly of a single group" in the interest of "increasing its power". Hence in Communist systems the main problem, economic as well as general, is freedom—meaning, he makes it plain, their overthrow.

## The Path to Freedom

But we know this is piffle. Improvement in the standard of living is not being continuously postponed, it is being effected. We know that, whatever the human errors and set-backs and limitations from which we are fast learning in the forward path, this is the general trend forward, not backward. And we know that the gain is not only material. The sum total of freedom has immeasurably expanded for hundreds of millions, many of whom have even only begun to be human beings, in the full sense, for the first time *via* the liberating force of Communism. We know it not from books of this or the other press but from the state of the world, life itself. We Communists are human, and man is born to error, as the sparks fly upward. (They do fly upward, none the less.) The promised land will not come of itself, we must learn and try to understand and be vigilant and be active to correct, and even try to anticipate our mistakes. But none of this invalidates communism. When the smoke of the Atlantic broadside has cleared away, we are left with hundreds of millions of people leading fuller, happier, finer lives because of what happened in October forty years ago, and hundreds upon hundreds of millions more who owe to it the opening of their path to freedom, the inspiration to sustain them in adversity. The sponsors of Djilas would have us believe that this is due to some sort of collective hallucination. It is no mirage, it is a fact firm as a rock.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

**Discussion on Economic Crisis**

# More on Crisis Theory

WHILST Emile Burns's article on crisis theory and current policy may leave something to be desired on the grounds of failure to elaborate on the precise development of crisis within capitalism, especially within the post-war period, that could well be through limitations of space. I consider that his main conclusions are correct and those of John Eaton wrong. The latter's main criticisms of Burns are two-fold, firstly that the present form of crisis in Britain is mainly financial and not a result of "the inability of the masses to buy the consumption goods that the expanding productive forces ultimately are designed to produce", and secondly that this alleged under-consumptionist theory has been denounced by Lenin as un-Marxist. By inference Burns's view is taken to be that of a crisis of under-consumption outside of production as opposed to a crisis caused by the anarchy of production.

The fact that the anarchy of production creates a disparity between production and consumption is treated as a secondary consideration and Marx's view refuting this is dismissed on the grounds that, ". . . it would be impermissible to base a whole theory on this one sentence . . . and doubly so when the sentence comes from a volume which Marx had not revised for publication." This quotation, which I think is vital, reads: "The last cause of all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses." Marx did not edit this because he died before being able to do so, but in any case why should it be assumed that he would have done so? Volume III of *Capital*, bear in mind, was a product of the later development of Marx and his theories. It is legitimate to accept that he meant what he wrote.

John Eaton writes, "At this very moment the British economy faces a most critical economic situation but to attribute it to a contradiction between production capacity and consumption would be to strain the facts quite unreasonably." Yet I fail to find in his article any analysis of the causes of the present "critical economic situation" but only an examination of symptoms coupled with an admission of inability to do so "in a little note". I agree that the subject needs much more extensive treatment but surely this must also have handicapped Emile Burns. However there are one or two questions which need answering:

1. What *is* the cause of the financial crisis?
2. What effect has the contradiction between production capacity and consumption in America had on this?
3. What will be the *ultimate* effect of these financial crises on employment and purchasing power?
4. Are we to assume that the masses are now insulated from such effects of crisis as unemployment or short-time working, or rather that, as Marx said, "The *last* cause of all real crises always remains, etc. etc." This is the crux of the argument between John Eaton and Emile Burns. If we accept Burns's position then the postponement of the "traditional" form of crisis is only of a temporary nature notwithstanding that new factors have come into play which can, and probably will, extend the period of relative stability. For example the effects of the *sputniks* and the dramatisation of the growing technological challenge to capitalist society could lead to a resurgence in armaments activity and a further deferment, but it would only be a deferment, of the traditional crisis.

The other view, John Eaton's view, seems to me to strike at the roots of Marxist theory in so far as it challenges the need for a Communist Party. Why is this? Because the leitmotiv of its philosophy is that man is a product of his environment. That is why the Communist Party is fashioned to change society as a pre-requisite to winning mass support for the economic and social policies of socialism. If the economic environment is stagnant then political advance and thinking is stagnant also. This would involve either resignation to the permanence of capitalism or a rejection of the view that it is impossible to change society solely through the media of educational processes. In turn this would lead to an admission of error in basic conceptions and the logical development of that admission—a decision to wind up the Communist Party and an influx into the Labour Party to advance the educational work for socialism.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In reality growing economic stresses suggest that the period of stability draws to an end, showing clearly in America, Canada, Britain and France. Expansion of armaments, as suggested above, could further delay this. But again the question is posed—would this solve the contradictions of capitalism or deepen them? Does capitalism avert a crisis of "disparity between production and consumption" by pouring goods into the sea or, what is equally fruitless, into armaments? Or on the other hand does not this process increase national indebtedness, create inflation, lower living standards, and eventually produce a crisis resulting in unemployment? This of course is conditional upon passive acceptance of a deterioration of its condition by the working class.

To my mind failure to recognise this would disarm us and make more easy the task of imposing such a solution upon us. The expansion of working class strength since the war, allied to the growing dependence of capitalism on working class co-operation as a result of the surging ahead of Soviet technology and power now opens up the possibilities of advance on a wide front by the British Labour movement.

REG BEECH
**(London)**

# The Law of Value and Prices under Socialism

(Summary of a Soviet Discussion)

ABOUT twelve months ago there took place a discussion at the Institute of Economics in Moscow which is of considerable interest to the study of the economics of socialism as well as for understanding some of the new developments in theory and practice set in motion by the Twentieth Congress. This discussion included not only the research staff of the Institute, but also the staff of other scientific bodies, such as the research departments of the planning commission and the Ministry of Finance, and workers in the Central Statistical Department, Ministry of Trade, university teachers etc. The discussion was opened by the economist Y. A. Kronrod and summed up by L. M. Gatovsky, head of the Institute of Economics and editor in chief of its monthly journal.

The note which preceded the published summary of the discussion contained the following:

> "As is well known, in this sphere there are many unsettled questions. A number of positions taken up in our literature until now and widely adopted need more precise working out, and some of them appropriate emendation. The practice of building communism imposes the necessity for a deeper scientific re-examination of questions of commodity-production under socialism and its peculiarities, of the action of the law of value and of utilising value as a lever in production and distribution. . . . Reform of price-policy has great economic significance, since directly linked with it is improvement in the forms of economic accounting, planning of prime costs and the profitability of production, questions of calculating the effectiveness of capital investment and of introducing new techniques etc."

Readers of Stalin's *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.* will remember that he places the main emphasis on the commodity-relationship (or market-exchange relation) between the "two basic forms of socialist production in our country" (state-owned production and collective farms) as basis for the continuing operation of the law of value. True, he mentions also (p. 23) that "consumer goods, which are needed to compensate the labour power expended in the process of production, are produced and realised in our country as commodities coming under the operation of the law of value"; adding "it is precisely here that the law of value exercises its influence on production". But the latter is given, apparently, a secondary role.

This emphasis has been one of the things to be questioned in the discussion. Instead, several of the speakers maintained (for example, Kronrod in his opening statement) that the necessity for commodity-production, and hence the influence of the law of value, depends not on the existence of two forms of socialist property, but on the character of labour under socialism. Wages are paid, under socialism, according to the amount and kind of work performed; and this use of wages as an incentive involves an act of exchange

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of products against the wages paid to workers in compensation for their labour expended.

Another formulation in *Economic Problems of Socialism* to be questioned (by implication) concerned the proper frontiers of political economy. In this work Stalin had drawn a distinction between political economy and "the economic policy of the directing bodies". "Political economy", he said (p. 81), "investigates the laws of development of men's relations of production. Economic policy draws practical conclusions from this, gives them concrete shape. . . . To foist upon political economy problems of economic policy is to kill it as a science". Hitherto it has been customary to regard price-policy, apparently, as a specialist question for planners, and prices simply as instruments of planning policy (if you wanted more of a thing produced you raised its selling price; if you wanted some fuel or raw material economised on you raised its price to the buyers of it). The latter was referred to by one speaker as "subjectivism in planning and the rule of the arbitrary"; and as regards the former several speakers followed Academician Nemchinov in calling on economists to recognise their "obligation to create a theory of planned prices".

The main complaint was that the prices of means of production (machinery, fuel, raw materials etc.) were too low. Kronrod, the opener, claimed that means of production were priced *below* their value and means of consumption *above* their value; with the result that wasteful use of the former was encouraged (e.g. insufficient effort was made to secure fuel-economy; insufficient care of machinery to prevent over-use and deterioration; undue preference was shown for turning out products with a high raw material content etc.). The practice has been to price both categories of goods initially (i.e. at the level of the factory or industry) at *prime cost,* including the wage cost of labour expended, cost of raw materials etc. used up, and an allowance for depreciation of plant and equipment. The turnover tax has (with certain exceptions) only been levied on consumer goods; being used to bridge the gap between the cost price as just described (which is the price paid to the industrial enterprise) and the retail price in the shop at which the commodity is sold to the final consumers. This existing practice was defended by some speakers (for example, Turetsky and Maisenberg). Its critics asserted that the turnover tax (like profits, or at any rate that part of them drawn into the budget by profits tax) represented that part of value that was "surplus product" used for society as a whole (e.g. as new investment, defence, maintenance of the non-productive workers in health, education, higher administration etc.). As such they maintained that it should be distributed evenly over all products. The failure to do so, it was said, derived from the false notion that means of production were not commodities under socialism, and accordingly their prices need not correspond to values.

A subordinate issue in the discussion (though quite an important one) was whether, if the price system were reformed, the correct principle would be to base individual prices on *values* (in Marx's sense) or on *prices of production.* Those supporting the latter principle (Bachurin and Malyshev in particular) pointed out that if individual prices were to be based on values, products involving a lot of capital or "stored-up labour" relative to direct or "living labour" in their production ("high organic composition of capital") would show a relatively low rate of profit, and *vice versa.* "Profitability would then be lower the higher the technical level of this or that branch [of industry]". So long as the productive forces of society (they argued) were still insufficient to supply every industry with all the equipment it needed and at the highest possible level of technique, there must be some criterion for deciding what were the most advantageous uses for the capital goods available. This criterion must be the level of profitability, and this (argued Malyshev) must be determined "not in relation to prime cost or to the wage bill, but in relation to the value of all the basic and turnover capital of an enterprise". This would "give the possibility of more fully calculating the effectiveness of capital investment"; otherwise a criterion for correctly economising on "stored-up labour" would be lacking. On the other side it was argued that "prices of production" were a law of capitalist competition, which had no place in a socialist economy.

One need hardly add that none of the participants in the discussion wanted to replace planning by the "automatic working" of market forces. They were treating price-policy as (1) an aid to planning—providing economic indices which planners could utilise in reaching decisions, (2) a lever to encourage industrial managements to take the most socially desirable decisions—decisions about methods of production, "assortments" of products turned out, quality etc.

M. D.

*Published by the Communist Party, 16 King Street, London, W.C.2, and printed by Farleigh Press Ltd. (T.U. all depts.). Beechwood Rise, Watford, Herts.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

**Important new contributions to Marxist thought from**

# China

*LET FLOWERS OF MANY KINDS BLOSSOM*

**BY LU TING-YI**

Price 6d.

*ON THE CORRECT HANDLING OF CONTRADICTIONS*

**BY MAO TSE-TUNG**

Price 6d.

**and the three reports presented to the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of China**

**REPORT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE**

LIU SHAO-CHI
Price 9d.

**REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION**

TENG HSIAO-PING
Price 9d.

**THE SECOND FIVE-YEAR PLAN**

CHOU EN-LAI
Price 9d.

**Central Books Ltd.**

*37 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1*

**MORE NEW BOOKS FROM ABROAD**

## Selected Works
**Vol. II**

*by Lu Hsun*

All the essays in this volume were written between 1918 and 1927. In simple, penetrating terms, with a strongly sardonic flavour, he attacks the reactionaries and criticises backward ideas and habits. His numerous Classical and other references are explained by footnotes. Fine cloth binding.

364 pp. **9/-**

*and still available*

## Selected Works
**Vol. I**

*by Lu Hsun*

Contains over forty short stories and essays by this "father of modern Chinese literature". Fine cloth binding.

440 pp. **10/-**

## Peking Opera

*by Eva Siao & Rewi Alley*

A beautifully illustrated introduction, with eight coloured plates and many photographs.

102 pp. **9/-**

## The Principles and Practice of Diplomacy

*by K. M. Panikkar*

". . . an admirable course in diplomacy . . . Mr. Panikkar has a sense of national history and he views the subject of diplomacy in the perspective of Indian history. This is what gives this hand-book a new edge."

*—Times of India*

99 pp. **9/6**

COLLET'S HOLDINGS LTD.
44-45 Museum Street, London, W.C.1

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# CLASSICS OF MARXISM

*First complete translation of*

**LENIN'S**

*THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM IN RUSSIA*

9s. 6d.

*The first joint work by*

**MARX and ENGELS**

*THE HOLY FAMILY or CRITIQUE OF CRITICAL CRITICISM*

*The famous polemic written in 1844 against the "Young Hegelians"*

7s. 6d.

*MARX AND ENGELS ON BRITAIN*

7s. 6d.

**Some new books from the U.S.S.R.**

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY OF THE U.S.S.R.
by N. N. BARANSKY 8s.

ANTHOLOGY OF CHARTIST LITERATURE
10s. 6d.

SOVIET STATISTICS 3s. 6d.

**CENTRAL BOOKS LTD.**

*37 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1*


PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED